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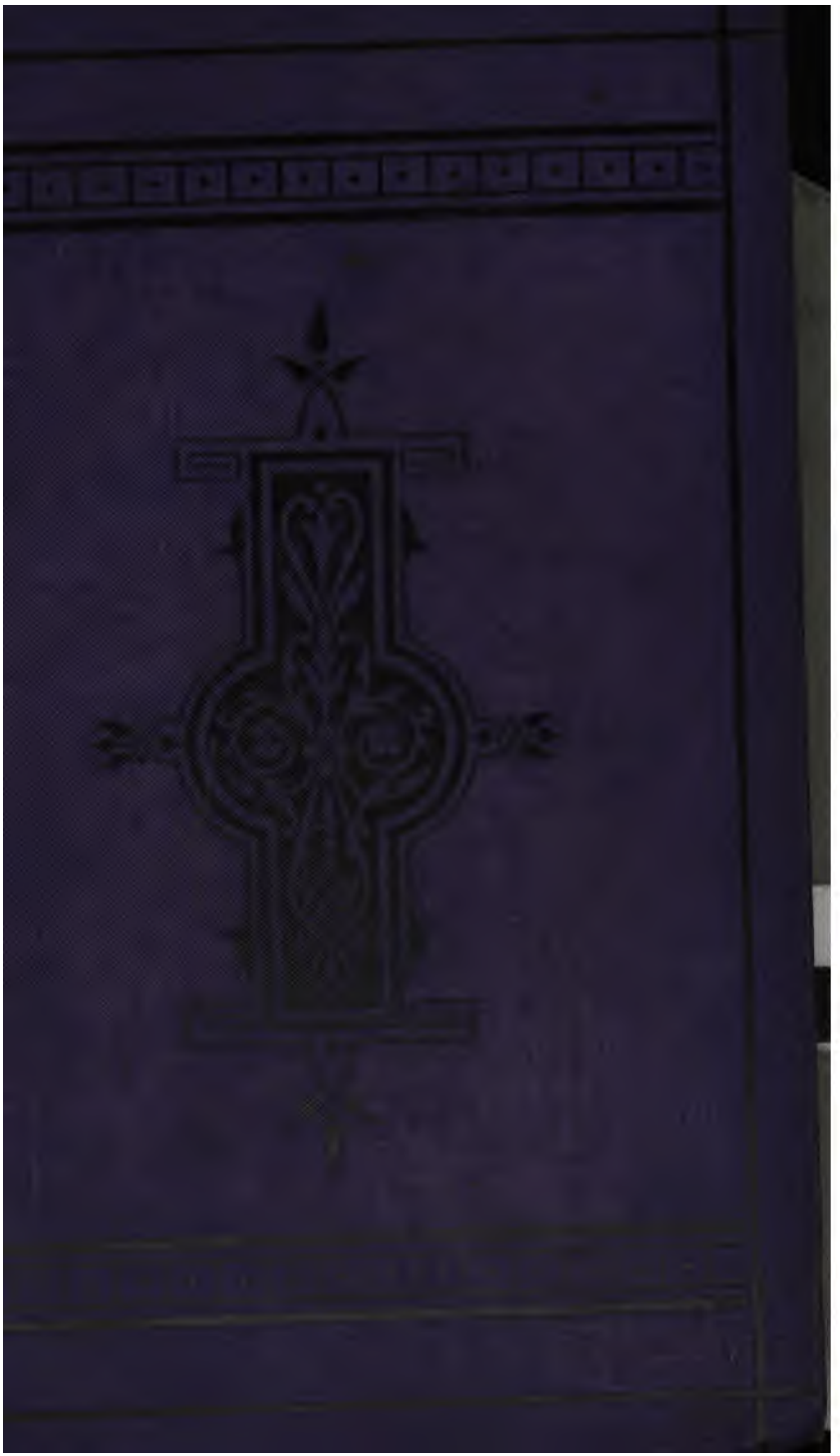

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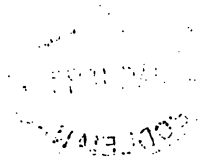

CHEER OR KILL.

A NOVEL.

BY

ELINOR AITCH.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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CHEER OR KILL.

CHAPTER I.

EXTRACTS FROM THE DIARY OF BERTRAM MESSETER, NO. 120, CONVICT AT CAYENNE.

"FEBRUARY 8TH.—I have arrived here to-day with the rest of my 'fellow passengers,' as the captain facetiously terms them—a set of loathsome blackguards—of desperate fiend-like men, with whom I have to associate, among whom I have to live. Nay, that, thank God! is not necessary. Juliet has at last done me a good turn. She left her stiletto behind her when she visited me at the *prison de* ———, in Paris, and I have carried it hidden in my shirt ever since. I picked up the fag-end of a

lead pencil that was dropped on the deck this morning, and with it I am writing these few lines on a scrap of paper the captain gave me. He appears a kind man, and he has been roughly good-natured to me during the voyage. I asked him for a bit of paper, for I wished to write a word or two, before making my exit from this world. He gave it to me just before we shoved off, pushed it into my hand without a word, and I hid it away in my dress. I shall direct it to you, Arthur, in the hope that it may be sent to France and delivered into your hands. Do not think me cowardly and impatient when you learn that I foresee a way out of my tortures. I have fully considered the act I am about to perform, and have come to the conclusion that it is the right thing to do. Yes, dear old Arty, it is a new light to look at suicide (for so they name this last resource of earthly woe) in, I know, but I have

thought it all *calmly* over, and as there are certain circumstances which render even the taking away a fellow-creature's life a laudable act, so are there conditions in which it is expedient for a man to commit the lesser crime of freeing his own soul from its vile encumbrance of matter. Were I to continue living among these ruffians, I should either become as base and contemptible as they are, or stark, staring mad. The only way in which I can rescue my soul is by committing an outrage on my body. Far better will it be to enter the other world a little prematurely—a little hastily, with a spirit pure of any sin, save that of rashness—than to wait till a wrathful summons is sent, and creep away fearfully loaded with a thousand crimes, stained through and through with the hideous, degrading sins of convict life. I have no fear of death —I mean of what comes after death (of

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of the vague, vast, loveless wilderness which I am about to enter. * *

Since I wrote the last sentence, I have been chained to No. 131. He is a *murderer*, a man who was taken in the very act of strangling his child. A thick-set, brutal looking fellow, with low brow, vicious eyes, and cruel mouth, more like an animal's than a man's. His unpleasant proximity rather interferes with the little piece of business I have on hand. The time I had fixed on was to-night, as soon as the darkness should have fallen, and shrouded me from the curious, callous eyes of my hateful associates — but now to attempt it were to fail, and lose my precious chance of liberty for ever. I must wait—perhaps when he falls asleep I may be able. He sleeps heavily I am sure. We have been working hard to-day, he may wake to-morrow morning from his deep, pig-like slumber to find himself

chained to a dead body. I can fancy his grunt of stolid surprise.

"February 28th.—No opportunity yet. The fellow *never* sleeps soundly. Can it be his cursed remorse that keeps him always half-awake? I have prayed and implored to be loosed from him, only for a night—only for an hour—but that fiend in man's shape, the jailor, has refused to unlock, even for a minute, the chains that bind me to my loathsome companion. My health is giving way—or my reason—I am not very sure which. I experience strange sensations. Sleep has left me. Hideous thoughts torment me. Monstrous imaginations visit me. I struggle against them—I try and think of pleasant long-ago days—of my cousins with whom I was brought up, merry careless boys — of the happy fields we wandered in—of the sunlight on the grass, and on the church spire—the genial, kindly sunlight! O God! O God!

keep my mind calm—let my reason not give way. In Thine infinite mercy slay me first!

"March 12th.—I have been loosed from No. 131, and am now bound to No. 10, an old man. He has already been out here *twenty* years. He is sentenced for life. He speaks gently, kindly—his heart is broken, he says. His life has been a long dream of misery. He is fifty years old. He looks seventy. His punishment has been just, he says, but it is nearly over now—he is dying. Very slowly though—very slowly. He is not impatient. I suppose he has waited so long that a month or so does not make much difference. He has questioned me, and I have told him my story. He seems pitiful. He has a son somewhere about the world. He would be my age now, twenty-five. I told him I was not yet that—was in fact only one-and-twenty. And he has kept on sighing and muttering ever since: 'Only

one-and-twenty — a mere lad — one-and-twenty—ought to be at school—ah, me!—ah, me!'

"March 30th.—Free at last, and alone in my cell. Alone! ah! the relief! inexpressible—unimagined! This is how it came about: Last night, when the old man was sleeping—he is a light sleeper, but last night his sleep appeared unusually profound — my time seemed come. The opportunity, though not perfect, was too precious to be lost. Our relative positions were convenient. The chain rattled a little as I drew the dagger from its hiding-place in the lining of my shirt (an unsafe hiding-place: it is by the merest chance it has not been discovered long since), but the old man never moved—never moved till I had bared my heart and raised my hand, and then, before it could descend, he got up suddenly, and caught it swiftly, and (I could never have conceived so much

strength in so worn a man) held it firmly, dagger and all! We looked at each other in silence. 'Don't betray me,' I whispered at length. 'Then give me the dagger,' he whispered in return. I told him I would not give it him. It was my chance of liberty—of heaven! 'You will be flogged almost to death if discovered—and if you do not give it me, I must raise an alarm.' I struggled to my knees, I bowed my head before him, as one praying a costly boon. I entreated him with the eloquence of despair to leave me my last, last hope. I adjured him solemnly not to block up the only loophole through which my soul could flee from the everlasting pains of hell. He remained silent, still holding my hand and the dagger. I took his wrinkled old hand and kissed it, and wept over it. I reminded him of his son, and asked him if he would rather he were lying wrapt away from the world's wrong

and strife beneath the quiet grass—or here — here where I was — arm-chained, degraded, to live on and die slowly a fearful death—the death of the soul! To lose all moral worth—all purity—all hope, and when all these were gone to lie down in abject sin and misery like some houseless, hunted dog — and cease to exist. I felt his grasp loosening—I wept—I pleaded more earnestly. He let go my hand — he turned away and hid his face. I stowed away the precious dagger in my shirt, then I lay down by him, and put my arm (the one that was not chained to his) round his neck, and pillowed his poor old grey head on my bosom. 'I cannot see you die,' he whispered with a tearless sob; his dim eyes have long forgotten how to weep—'promise me to wait till we are separated. I will manage it as soon as I can—promise me.' I promised him. He has been as good as his word. Half-an-hour

ago, they parted us. I pressed his hand. I thanked him softly — but he would not speak to me, nor raise his head. Poor old man! pray God his release may be speedy —almost as speedy as mine.

* * * * * * * *

Another check, curse them; they could not let me be—even for an hour! I am chained to another monster. God help me, and preserve my reason!

"April —.—I have lost count of the days, but what does that matter! I shall soon be where there are no days, nor nights; no morns, nor noons, nor eves. It will be one long day, or night. I hope it will be always night; no light, no sun—the sun has been so cruel, blazing down on my misery, glorying in my shame. My head is burning still from its pitiless, dazzling heat. Ha! ha! I have given them the slip at last. I feigned to be mad to-day, while working in the field under the noon-tide glare. I clapped my hands, and

shrieked out strange curses to the calm, faint blue of the cloudless sky. My companion was frightened; he struggled frantically to break the chain that bound us. The overseers came running — I laughed at them, jeered and jibbered! I danced a '*pas seul*' round them, clinking my chains in their faces! I was unbound from my terrified companion and led away. The doctor was consulted, a rough, ignorant apothecary. I was ordered rest and solitary confinement for a few days. I should then, he said, 'be all right again.' O God! how my head is burning. Can it be the world's hatred that has set it on fire? All right again soon—all right. If I could only stand steady—but the walls go round—the floor heaves. Don't look at me like that, Arthur! It will soon be over. You should look glad, not sorry. Marie, your tears blind me—I cannot see—I cannot find ——."

CHAPTER II.

BERTRAM'S DIARY.

"JUNE 21ST.—I have been very ill, at death's door, but the door was shut against me. The angels would have opened it from sheer pity, I think, but He has said 'Not yet,' and His will be done! Yes, I can say that at last—at last. The madness and the fever have passed away, leaving me calm, submissive, almost content. I do not altogether trust this calmness—I am aware that severe illnesses, especially of the type from which I have been suffering, are apt to be succeeded by a languor of mind and body, easily and often mistaken for peace; yet I think—I believe that a permanent change has come over me. A quiet strength, an abiding patience, an immense endurance have crept into my heart, such a restless heart as it was, too!

Dear old Arty, I shall see you again some day; I feel it, I know it. Thank God for giving me this confidence! thank Him also for sending me a friend in my great need. A friend to watch by me, to soothe me, to comfort me as only women can soothe and comfort us when we suffer. I don't know who she is, I don't even know her name. Only a convict nurse, you will say when you read this (and you will read it, for she is going to send it to you somehow—she says she knows a doctor who knows you), yet she has saved my life and perhaps my reason. She is not nice to look at (at least as much as I can see of her face). She wears a peculiar kind of dress, and a cap that almost hides her face. The men are such a rough lot, she says it is better that a woman who is obliged to go among them should conceal as much of herself as possible. I quite agree. She has no eyebrows, and a scar on her forehead which is

only just healing. I asked her how she got it. She said she fell one night when it was very dark—she was alone, and the road was rough. Her voice seems familiar to me sometimes. Women's voices are so similar, I suppose it would be curious to hear a voice with perfectly new intonations, and utterly strange inflexions. I have reposed a certain confidence in her. She says she does not believe in my guilt, and that she will help in every way to ameliorate my condition. She has supplied me with paper to any amount, and she brings me fresh flowers from the fields to brighten my cell. The officials are much kinder to me, and the doctor is certainly prejudiced in my favour. He has given orders for me still to be kept by myself, and he told me this morning that he would exert his influence to obtain a separate cell for me permanently. If he succeeds, the chief cause of my wretchedness will be removed. Soli-

tude, confinement, even the coarse food that is my portion, sink into insignificance before the horror of being chained day and night to a murderer. No wonder it nearly turned my brain. The old man is dead. I have not seen him since that night when we parted and I went as he thought, and I thought, to my death. The nurse found me, she says, down upon my face, perfectly insensible; and for many days and nights after I lay raving and screaming on my straw mattress with an attack of brain-fever. She did not mention anything about the dagger. I asked her one day whether she had seen it, and where it was. She answered that she had seen it, that she found it clasped in one of my hands so tightly she could hardly extract it. She was determined to do so, however, for she knew if the officials found it there would be investigations concerning it which would probably involve me in further trouble. I asked her

if she would return it to me; I was curious to know what she would reply. She answered in the negative, very decidedly, and added that suicide was both cowardly and selfish. I argued the point with her, maintaining that under certain circumstances it was laudable. I wanted to hear all my false reasoning and wrong deductions on the subject utterly refuted and overthrown. I was not disappointed. Her words were few, but they were also to the point: there were no circumstances under which it was right or manly to destroy life. The more straightened, the more hopeless one's position in the world, the more cowardly, the more mean it was to flee from it. But when one felt one's self deteriorating—when one feared contaminating influences? It was a confession of weakness—of abject unpardonable weakness—to leave this earth on the plea that it was too wicked to live on. There ought to be no evil influences

too strong this side hell for a man who is worthy the name. And for a woman? She would not say: women were different—God help them! but for a young man, strong, talented, innocent, to show the 'white feather,' under any possible stress or imaginable trouble, was a pitiable sight. She should not see it again, if I could help it, I remarked. Her words stung me — roused me like a trumpet-call. My manhood awoke 'full statued in an hour,' strong to bear, to dare, or to die. It did not—it does not seem to matter much what men or angels say against us, so that our hearts and hands are clean. My life shall be heroic—marred, broken, defeated, unutterably desolate—it shall shine with a brighter lustre than fame can give, it shall be surrounded with a halo more pure than that which encircles the anchorite's head. I will show the world how much a brave heart can bear without breaking! I will teach it how vain the

excuses are with which it cloaks its ill-doing, by proving that a soul, young, innocent, inexperienced, may dwell amongst the scum of the earth, and never take a stain. After all, loss is nobler than gain, failure than attainment. The soul that can win earth's best, is great: the soul that can bear earth's worst, is sublime.

"July 2nd.—I had a dream last night—strange, beautiful as a heavenly vision. I lay down on my mattress, tired, sad, hopeless. I arose glad, confident, hopeful. My sleep was uneasy at first. The sense of loneliness and pain that I had borne calmly enough all day, caused me to weep sorely in my dreams. I knew myself imprisoned, desolate, despairing. I cried aloud to God for pity, for consolation. The dumb blue sky was spread above me, that so often in waking hours had seemed to mock my lifted hands and yearning eyes. My emotion woke me, but before the tears were dry upon my

cheek, I fell asleep again, and dreamed that I was sitting by the way-side very weary, trying vainly to rub off some ugly stains upon my hands, that looked like blood, but which I knew were only from some blackberries I had eaten as I came along. I felt distressed at not being able to get my hands clean. I looked about for a stream to bathe them in, but there was none. A road lay before me, the road I had to traverse. Far as my eyes could see it had no turning, no shade, no shelter. Bleak, bare, dusty, interminable, it stretched before me. A voice uttered these words in my ear: 'If you wish to reach your journey's end before nightfall, you must arise, and hasten on your way, for the sun is already westering.' So I arose and went on my way, grieving because of my loneliness and fatigue, but grieving most of all because of the stains upon my hands — the stains I was ashamed of by reason of their looking so like blood. The

undefined 'they' who were to welcome me at the end of my journey would be afraid to touch me, and I was fainting for the kindly clasp of human hands. I walked on and on, and still the distance never neared, and I grew more tired and footsore every minute. Suddenly I saw the sun before me, setting behind a mountain in a bank of crimson clouds, and I knew that it would soon be dark, and then I should never reach home. Even as I feared it, the darkness fell; and with one of those rapid changes so frequent in dreamland, I found myself wandering on a mountainous waste, with no light but the faint glimmer of a half-obscured moon to guide me. I knew that I was lost, that I should never see any I loved again, never hear their voices, nor touch their hands. I knew I should go on wandering for ever here—for ever lost—for ever comfortless. Presently I became aware that there were fearful precipices on either

side of me. In great trembling and fear I fell upon my knees and prayed for light and guidance, and, as if in answer to the prayer, hands were stretched out to me from the darkness. I tried to seize them, but as soon as I did so they vanished. Over and over again, just as I thought to clasp them, they receded from sight and touch. 'I see how it is,' I cried, my heart breaking with despair; 'they think the stains on my hands are blood-stains, and so they will not touch them.' Then the faint light of the moon faded altogether, and in the pitchy darkness I felt myself going down—down—down. I knew I must have fallen over one of the precipices. 'It's all over at last,' I thought, and instead of feeling apprehensive, a sense of absolute relief came to me with the thought. After awhile I became aware that I was no longer descending, and as I lay still with my eyes shut, the sweet familiar scent of flowers was wafted to me.

'It can't be heaven,' I said to myself; 'perhaps it's a dream; I won't open my eyes to see.' Far away in the distance a voice began to sing an air I knew, tender and plaintive. I felt the tears stealing down my cheeks, and I was glad, for it seemed to me I had not wept for many a day. The singing stopped rather abruptly. I heard the rustle of a woman's dress close to me. I turned over and lay hiding my face in the grass. 'Why are you so sad, Mons.—?' (I could not catch the name; it was not mine, yet I knew the words were addressed to me), a voice asked just above me. I opened my eyes at last with a sigh, and saw a beautiful bright young face bending over me. It reminded me strangely of Marie's, yet it was not hers; it was much younger and far more beautiful. It was the face of a very young girl, almost a child, albeit the great grey eyes were full of a tender understanding sympathy. I sat up and looked round

me before I answered. I was lying under the shade of a wide-spreading tree; near me bright flowers were blooming in fancifully-cut *parterres;* yellow sunlight was flashing and beaming. I could see the air vibrating with heat, and the small summer flies swarming and fretting. 'I am sad,' I said, 'because the way has been so long and dreary, and there were none to help.' She said something in answer, but I cannot recollect what. The dream grew somewhat indistinct. The next I can recall, she was sitting beside me on the grass, trying to comfort me, and these words I heard her say distinctly, as distinctly as though an actual voice had spoken them to my waking ear:—'You must have suffered, but it is all over now; you must not be sorry about it now.' I held out my hand to thank her, then half withdrew it, for I remembered the stains. She took it in hers with a sudden movement and raised it to her lips.

The dream faded — the garden — the girl — the wide-spreading tree, and I awoke sobbing with unutterable satisfaction. I felt, I feel still that it was no common dream, no meaningless confusion of every day thought, no mere sleep-fraught blending of places and faces, and words known to me, or heard by me. I am conscious of a reality, a vividness about it, which I cannot put into words. Impressive as a vision—comforting as hope—it has left a strange and blessed peace in my heart, which does not pass away. I am aware this avowal would be met with much ridicule by most people. I wonder what they would say if they heard me further assert that I expect this dream or vision to come true? Set me down as mad, I suppose. Talk about the mournful effects of solitary confinement—sigh over the often—too often alas! lamentable consequences following brain-fever. And I whose reason

(thank God!) the solitary confinement has calmed, not weakened, and whose brain the fever has left unimpaired and unclouded, would laugh at them, and still hold the conviction in my heart that some day — somewhere — somehow, I shall see the garden of my dream again, and the beautiful face bending over me, every line and tint of which I can remember. I also still rest assured that in the far-off years to come I shall hear these words again, spoken by the girl-voice of my dream, 'You must have suffered, but it is all over now—don't be sorry.' Sweet words — sweet face—sweet lips—flee not, fail not—fade not—till in some blissful waking hour I hear and see, and feel you once again! Divine message, comfort me still! leave me not till the star-like Hope thou hast brought fade in the red dawn of a golden Reality."

CHAPTER III.

LETTER FROM JULIET VENINI, TO DR. MARBLE.

"DEAR DR. MARBLE.—I am sending you some extracts from Bertram Messeter's Diary. You will learn from them all that has taken place since he has been here. All through the illness which he mentions, I had the infinite happiness of nursing him. I arrived here only just in time. The malady had already seized him, and deprived him of consciousness. I was sent to his cell, and found him lying on his face with the dagger grasped in his hand with which he had tried to destroy himself. If he had done so, it would have been my fault, for I unwittingly left a dagger behind me when I visited him in Paris. I did not remember doing so till I saw it in his hand. You will no doubt

wonder what induced me to take an instrument of this sort with me to his prison in Paris, but you will at any rate be certain (knowing me as you do) that it was for no good. Never mind, it was not to stab *him* with. My disguise is complete. I have singed and cut off my eyebrows and eyelashes, and have given myself a scar on the forehead. You can have no idea how utterly these little manœuvres have changed my face. Do you know I absolutely did not recognise myself in a mirror I chanced to be passing one day! I thought it was the reflection of some one behind me, and looked about and around, before I discovered that the hideous, ghastly, disfigured face mirrored opposite me, was my own. I also wear a bit of black sticking-plaster over one of my front teeth. My dress aids me by concealing most effectually my figure and hair. It is not becoming. I used to have a fair share

of female vanity. I wonder where it has gone—for gone it has! Ask any of your lady friends if a young, good-looking woman, who voluntarily, in cold blood, disfigures and renders hideous her own face, can have a particle of vanity, female or otherwise, in her composition. Well, it is only fair that some of the dross of my nature should be burned on the shrine where all the gold has long ago been consumed. Is it not? The French painters used to rave about my eyes in the old childish days when I used to help out the earnings of my self-made madre and padre, by sitting in stuffy, dirty studies for hours, dressed up in all sorts of costly dresses. Now, I was haughty, low-browed Livia, with all my dark curly hair brought down over my forehead, and gorgeous scarlet shawls wrapped round me. Now, a simple peasant girl, with muslin cap, showing my teeth in a broad

grin, and holding up a bunch of spring-flowers. Once I remember I sat for the 'Serpent of Old Nile,' dying from the Asp's sting. My eyes should have been shut, the artist said, but he could not lose the chance of painting such eyes; I was to keep them open. I heard afterwards the picture was thought a great deal of, chiefly on account of the eyes, which, contrary to all precedent in the painting of 'Egypt,' were open, and looked upwards, glazed and dying. They were wonderfully painted, it was said, and wonderfully beautiful. I may repeat some of the old praises about them — now that they are quite spoiled. 'We safely praise the dead,' and my beauty is dead. There! I will not write more about it—look upon these foregoing sentences as the last moan of a vain woman's personal conceit, and pardon them accordingly. My life here is not particularly hard. The convicts are not often ill, and

the other work I am obliged to do is not very arduous nor repulsive. I have been very happy during the last fortnight, happier than I looked ever to be again in this world, or any other. He speaks gently to me—he even smiles on me like he used to do before—Oh, Dr. Marble, he is so brave! so patient! so noble! any man on earth might be proud to call him friend, any woman to kneel and kiss his feet. He is changed, and pale and thin since his illness, and the grand dark eyes that used to flash and sparkle have grown steady and patient, and so mournful, they make me cry. What plans have you been forming to obtain his freedom? Is there any chance of our being able to get him out of this hateful place in a couple of years? Tell me anything I can do. I shall not shrink from it—there is no sacrifice so hard, so bitter, but I would willingly subscribe to for his sake. Surely

between us we shall be able to bring about his release. He says I have made his imprisonment endurable. Thank God! for permitting me to do even this. I supply him with paper and pencils, and since he has been ill I have got the doctor to order him different food. He is rapidly gaining strength now, and to-morrow he is to recommence his prison labour. I have persuaded the doctor to limit it to half the usual *regime* for the first month, on account of his not being in full health. He told me a dream he had the other night which comforted him strangely. I need not tell it you, for there is a description of it in the extracts I forward you. You will think me as fanciful as he (and with less cause), when I tell you that the said dream has troubled me as much as it has consoled him. Everywhere I see the face of the dream-girl he described to me as bending over him when he lay in the gar-

den. It was cruel of him to paint it so minutely — so lovingly. A child-like face with large serious eyes, ripe red lips, and a dimpled chin. That would have been enough; he need not have gone on to describe the tearful, surprised look in those eyes, nor the tremulous compassion of those smiling lips, nor the sudden wayward flash of her beautiful golden hair as she stooped to kiss his hand; for now I shall never be able to forget the picture—the dream-girl has taken form and life in my imagination, and the daily, nightly vision pains me incomprehensively.

* * * * * *

Write Bertram a long letter, directed to me; I will give it him; and make his uncle write to him, and enclose the letter with yours. If there is anyone else he would care to hear from, you can do the same by them. Write to me yourself. *Cher ami*, I often think of the kind young doctor, who saved this worthless life twice, and wish I

could somehow show my gratitude to him. Mind you let me know all your ideas and plans about Bertram.—Yours very affectionately, "JULIET VENINI."

LETTER OF DR. MARBLE TO JULIET, AUGUST 1ST.

PARIS.

(It is only fair to the reader who would otherwise read this letter in helpless admiration of the young doctor's supernatural sapience, to remark that it took him one whole night to compose, and that Mary Jane, an English housemaid imported from Yorkshire, coming to "redd the hearth," the following morning found it completely shrouded beneath what looked like the contents of many waste-paper baskets, but which on further investigation she concluded had been caused by the doctor "a tearing up his love-letters," as on torn scraps of paper she spelt out sundry

sentences, as follow:—"*My own darling, it cuts me to the heart to think of you so—*" "Often," finished Mary Jane, brilliantly. "*Talking of dreams, the other night I dreamt I held you in—*" (After some searching and comparing Mary Jane found another scrap of paper, on which the continuation of the sentence was inscribed)—"*my arms, and you looked up with those dear—*" ("Drat it," remarked Mary Jane, "just the most intrastin place," and commenced another groping in the paper-heaps, discovering, after the exercise of much patience, another scrap with the following important and thrilling words thereon)—"*eep eyes, and whispered—Now I am sa—*" "Ow touchin," said Mary Jane, wiping her eye with the corner of her apron. "*Dearest, I'm looking forward—*" But to what, Mary Jane could not ascertain. "*Poor ill-treated eyes, how cou—*" "*I wish I could kiss an—*" "Lawks! he *is* spooney," ejaculated Mary Jane, pursuing her search

with renewed vigour. However, I think we have pryed sufficiently into the contents of the doctor's grate to satisfy the reader as to what his employment was during the greater part of the night on which he produced this highly commendable epistle. The summer nights are short and calm. Cold daylight was about and around him as he penned it; perhaps this last fact partly accounts for the praiseworthy reserve and manly self-command which is evinced in its contents. Dear reader, be you young or be you old — be you male or be you female, never sit down to write to a distant, *dear* friend as the daylight is dying, unless you wish him or her to know the secret workings of the love you bear them. Heart to heart you will converse with them; pages and pages will be filled with tender protestations of undying affection, forgetful of the cruel distance that separates your bodies, and of the crueler, more impassable void that

separates your spirits; unconsciously, and quite unintentionally, you will confess that "all the current of your being flows to them;" and if after reading the precious effusion by the approving light of the perfidious moon, you lie down to your slumbers till the morning, awake—re-read—tear up—re-write. There is no harm done, no suffering incurred, no loss sustained except that of a little sleep, and time, and note-paper; but if you should happen to post as well as write this said effusion by the light of the moon, God help you when the sunlight streams into your room next morning! I am inclined to think if the doctor had sat down to write to Juliet after breakfast instead of before retiring to rest he would have saved Mary Jane the trouble of making investigations in the grate the following morning. But better late than never; let us be thankful the doctor's good sense and the daylight came to the rescue in time. Here goes—)

"My Dear Juliet.—I was very glad to hear from you, and also of the success of your brave undertaking. As to my plans about Bertram I have, after consulting lawyers by the score—not to mention some half-dozen barristers—come to the conclusion that as we cannot set him free by fair means, we must try artifice. Let me know every detail and particular of his prison life; also how far you are trusted, how much you are allowed to be with him, and what opportunities you have for private communication with him. I shall then be able to form some idea of what would be the most expedient plan to adopt for his release, and if I see a way in which my presence can be of any use, I will set sail immediately for your whereabouts. Don't forget to describe the jailor, or jailors, their habits, appearance and characters. I shall then be able to judge if they are likely to be easily 'corrupted.' About the doctor, also, I shall like to know everything you can tell me.

You had better tell Bertram you are willing to assist his escape. You must do so cautiously, or he will be likely to suspect your identity. You have already told him you are acquainted with me—you can tell him as you did me, that you are indebted to me for past services, and glad of the opportunity of repaying the obligations through him. His uncle is dead: he has been dead almost a month. I have told him about it in my letter. There is no one else that I know of from whom he would care to hear. Little Marionetta de Mailly is very happy and well; she seems a very clever child by all accounts. I hope her father won't turn up, and claim her just as we are getting fond of her. It is not improbable. It appears Marie de Mailly married an Englishman of considerable wealth, and that he and she had some disagreement about her continuing to act (I don't blame him for his scruple on that score), and that they parted in anger, he declaring he would never see her

again, and that from thenceforth she should be free to go to the devil if she pleased; he would not interfere. It is to be supposed that he is still alive, as he was (when he parted from her six years ago) a strong, as well as a young man. The *bonne* that still attends Marionetta says she can remember his face perfectly—he was a proud, stern-looking man, and she thinks her mistress was never very fond of him. He was of her, very likely! It is so *often* the way, and perhaps it was the knowledge that she did not care for him sufficiently to give up her stage-triumphs, drove him from her side, rather than the mere wilfulness of her conduct. However, these are only surmises of mine, and will not interest you. As to the dream, I understand why it pains you. You think Bertram is already in love with his dream-girl, and you feel the shadow of that jealousy you would experience were she in the flesh—a warm, living impersonation of the sweet charms Bertram's dream has

imaged forth with such strange demonstrative power. I would not trouble myself about such a visionary rival if I were you. Unwavering constancy — undying love, must have their reward in time. Men's hearts are not made of stone, or 'petrified earth,' as I once heard a young lady declare. No one can remain for ever indifferent to the pure devotion of a true heart. Even if Bertram should never love you in exactly the way your heart desires, still rest assured he will ever feel for you a lasting and deep-seated affection which time will be powerless to weaken or destroy.—Yours always truly,

"ARTHUR MARBLE."

A doubtful comfort, a sorry compensation, so Juliet thinks, as she reads, and remarks to herself with the hasty judgment of the young: "He cannot have loved me really, or he could never dream of suggesting such a substitute."

She does not know—how should she?—that

there is as much difference in the amount of sustenance required by human hearts as there is in the proportion of nourishment required by human bodies. Some hearts—aye, and the noblest too—are kept from failing and withering with a crust of comfort, so hard, so tasteless, that were it offered to others less noble, they would turn away and break in a desolate passion of disdainful rejection.

"The doubtful comfort" suggested by the doctor is of the kind that his own brave heart lives on from day to day. "She likes me, I am her friend. She always comes to me to help her in distress," is what he tells himself when his heart heaves and moans in its loneliness. "I have already done more for her than any other human being has. I may be able to serve her again some day. I cannot wish to die, while there is any hope of my being able to protect her," and under this hope there lurks no wild, sweet dream of her

ever loving him; there hides no other comfort than that his letter suggests—"a lasting and deep-seated affection."

"He cannot have loved me really," says Juliet, for such love as his is too pure for her passion-maddened heart to comprehend, too unselfish for her tainted egotistical nature to believe in. Her love is too earthly to be satisfied, or even appeased with the affection of its object. Under all the apparent pureness of her devotion, all the self-denial, all the patient, uncomplaining service of her life, there lies in ambush the old fierce determination which her anguish has failed to soften, her despair to purify, to desire. "I *will* grow round him in his place; live—die—looking in his face."

CHAPTER IV.

A DESPERATE STRATAGEM.

FIVE years have passed away. Five years! And Bertram Messeter is still in the convict prison at Cayenne. Dr. Marble has been over twice during the five years to try and further a plan for his escape. Once, Bertram has consented to make an attempt to regain his liberty, and the effort has proved worse than useless, worse in that he has been more strictly watched and closely guarded since. Fortunately (I use the word only in its finite sense) neither Juliet nor Dr. Marble were implicated in the matter; no suspicion falling on them as being instigators, or partakers of the plot. This fact was partly owing to Juliet's consummate skill in feigning, and partly to the world-old propensity of mankind to "pitch upon the wrong person." When

I said no suspicion, I ought to have made a reservation in favour of the prison doctor, but after all, his was more than a suspicion, it was very like a quiet conviction as to the parties implicated. He, as has already been hinted, was very much interested in Bertram, and being a discreet, albeit a red-haired young man, he held his peace and kept his conviction to himself. The same morning that Dr. Marble was waiting about a mile distant from the prison with a couple of horses, swift as the wind, on which he and Bertram were to ride away into a new world of liberty and happiness, that same morning the jailor who on account of Bertram's illness and lingering indisposition had not entered his cell for months, took into his "confounded old muddled pate" (the doctor's expression—we are not responsible) to pay a visit to his invalided charge. He withdrew somewhat dismayed, and amazingly voluble about an aperture in the grated window large enough to admit of a man's exit.

The matter was smoothed over. The prison doctor consulted. Poor youth was suffering from a species of delirium; evidently no fixed idea of escape, as the fact of his presence in the cell, from which an egress was rendered easy, sufficiently testified. But the file—the instrument which had rendered his escape easy? Better ask the nurse, she had been with him last. Nurse summoned—apparently much agitated. Did she know anything about the file? Please, she didn't happen to know what a file meant, if the gentleman would kindly explain? A long bit of iron with a rough edge. She had seen a bit of iron lying about the cell for some time past. She didn't notice particularly if it had a rough edge or not. Why did she leave it there? She never thought—what could a bit of old rusty iron harm? She always thought No. 120 so quiet and submissive like. She never took much heed of things in his cell. She didn't know it was

her duty — she thought the jailor — she thought— There—there, that would do. She might go, and try to be more careful in future.

This occurred in the first year of his imprisonment. The next year the doctor again made his appearance at Cayenne. He and Juliet again tried to persuade Bertram to escape, but to no purpose. He refused utterly to risk the life of both themselves and himself by a second futile attempt to flee. He had resolved to abide his doom, he told them —not selfishly to cast the shadow of it over others by his impatience.

Thus five years had rolled away—five years during which we will refrain from even glancing into a certain narrow cell to see how its inmate bore the "anguish of patience" they brought him. We will leave him to fight it out alone, whether he overcomes—or whether he is overcome—whether he grows greater than his pain—or whether it masters

him, we will leave the subsequent chapters to decide. Suffice it to remark that he should have ample and ready sympathy if the trial has proved too much for his strength, should he emerge light-headed, weak-hearted, or cruel-thoughted, and hard-hearted — no finger must point, no stones must be hurled, no reproaches—no ridicule must be heard. The furnace has been heated to "seven times seven." It purifies gold they say, but then the alloy, the "base alloy" that is mixed so freely in the purest nature, that in some is the "foundation stone" of their worth—when it is purged away, burnt and withered in the cruel flame. How about the fallen structure, "the noble ruin," "the piteous wreck?" Turn away your faces, if such an one comes tottering forth, veil your eyes and weep, for the angels have hushed their songs, and there is wild mirth among the fiends below. But if on the contrary, the tribulation has worked good, if the soul through

much agonising travail has risen at length far above and beyond it; if the gold was so pure, the alloy so trifling, that the furnace only gave an additional splendour to the one while the other was imperceptibly and harmlessly destroyed, if in short a brave man, saddened, not crushed, sobered —not broken; if such an one comes forth, after a five years' sojourn in a convict prison, why all I can say is that this little tale will not be wanting in that personage indispensable to novel-lore—a hero!

Five years to-night, and to-night for the second time during his imprisonment, Bertram has consented to try and make his escape. The plan is all Juliet's this time. Dr. Marble has had no hand in it, he is not even aware that a second attempt to rescue his friend is about to be made, This fact has given rise to the chief argument Juliet has used to persuade Bertram to make the effort. No one will be

involved in the risk. If it fails he alone will suffer—death, perhaps, but there are many and great chances in his favour,—if it were not so, if the scheme were not almost certain to succeed—Juliet herself would shrink from proposing it. She had not written to apprise the doctor of it on purpose that she herself, and she alone may have the unutterable satisfaction of giving back to Bertram the priceless boon of liberty which her own rash hands had rifled. "Unutterable satisfaction" it will be, but at what cost has she purchased it? The plan she has adopted occurred to her some months since, on the departure of the old jailor who was placed as sentry to Bertram's cell. The departure of the old man being simultaneous with the arrival of another jailor, a young man. A change was soon observable in Juliet's outward appearance, her eyebrows began to grow again, (she told the curious she had obtained a preparation which caused them to revive, but she only left those

illused appendages to themselves, and they grew quickly enough). She altered her dress in one or two trifling particulars, but the slight modifications effected, served to change it as if by magic, from a peculiarly unbecoming, to a remarkably becoming dress. She never entered Bertram's cell on any pretext (the prison doctor had been as good as his word, and in accordance with a petition based on strong medical assertions, had obtained for Bertram a separate cell during the expiration of his term of imprisonment), but often —almost daily, had occasion to address Henwick, the young, and ill-favoured sentry posted outside. She had told Dr. Marble in the first letter she wrote him, that her beauty was dead. She has had a pleasant assurance given to her, in the prosecution of her little plan, that not only had it certainly revived again, but was as potent to charm as ever, seeing that a dull, coarse, unimpressionable barbarian like Henwick, the new jailor, had utterly succumbed

to its influence in a few weeks. Juliet was pleased, perhaps, with this proof of her attractions (albeit from so low a source), at any rate she could not have been more tantalizing loving, and lovingly tantalizing with the enamoured official if she had been a girl, coy with love, playing with her favoured lover. She submitted to his embraces—she smiled graciously at the blundering, uncouth expressions of his love, but she shook her head half-sadly when he vowed there was nothing in heaven or earth he would not do, or dare, for her sake. She "had so often heard the same thing before—she believed he loved her, but—" Let her put him to the proof, let her ask him some great thing—let her set him some impossible feat to perform for her sake, and see if he would not accomplish it. Ah, if she could believe that—if she could be assured of that, that there was one man in the world who loved her well enough to make some slight sacrifice—to run some slight right risk for

her. Let her mention it—let her only mention it. She would meet him in the evening and then perhaps, she would find courage to tell him, it was so hard to run the chance of being undeceived. She had been allowing herself to dream he loved her, and if—well she would try and not shrink from putting the test to her happiness. But Juliet could not summon up sufficient courage that evening. She let a week slip by, and still—still—the resolute, determined will faltered. Had the hard, wearing, lonely life told upon her at last? was her old fearless fixity of purpose lost to her, that she faltered and pined, and moaned for days before she could make up her mind to ask her rough, unexacting lover to grant her a boon? A fortnight passed in this way—three weeks, and then Juliet discovered with some vexation that she was growing quite haggard and thin. She examined her heavy eyes and colourless face discontentedly, and settled that to delay any longer

was to lessen her chance of obtaining the boon she desired. After all it must have been no ordinary request she had to make, if the hopes and fears concerning it, could drag her sleepless from her bed, and keep her pacing her room night after night, in restless fevered anxiety. One morning very early, while the red light of dawn was still flushing the sky, she rose up and dressed herself with deliberate care and patience. She put aside her nurse's costume for the first time since her residence in Cayenne, and donned a white dress of flimsy material, that contrasted becomingly with her dark complexion and hair, and clung in soft folds about her tall, lithesome figure. Henwick's night-watch outside Bertram's cell was relieved at seven in the morning. At half-past seven o'clock on the morning in question, he was standing (waiting apparently), sleepy, heavy-eyed and listless, by some jagged rocks on the cliff side. Presently he threw himself at full length on

the dry short grass, his eyes blinked helplessly—closed—opened the fifth of an inch, closed again, and with a long breath something between a snore and a sigh, he fell into a profound slumber. He was awakened suddenly out of his dreamless dog-like repose, by a voice, clear and high, pronouncing his name in anything but gentle tones, and opening his dazed eyes he saw, or at least what appeared to his half-unconscious gaze as such—a beautiful white-robed angel by his side. The angel spoke—"Henwick, is this the way you keep trust? I have come to ask you to do a thing for me. It is not much—not very much, at least; but I must wait till you have roused yourself."

Different people see things in a different light. Juliet had said the request she had to make was not great; Henwick evidently thought it not only very great, but enormous—not only enormous, but preposterous.

An hour passed—two hours, and still they

failed to see the same thing in the same light. At one time during the interview Juliet was actually kneeling on the sandy grass at the young jailor's feet. At another time she was standing erect, gesticulating as if in angry expostulation. At another she was lying her beautiful face against his rough jacket and looking up mutely into his face with tearful, pleading eyes; and then again their positions of beseecher and beseeched appeared reversed, and she lay on the ground with heaving shoulders and hidden face, while he knelt beside her, laying persuasive hands upon her, and whispering eagerly. And yet again she was standing before him, with concealed face and drooping, shrinking figure, while he held her hand. For a long time they stood so—he speaking softly, but firmly, and she repeating the words after him in slow, reluctant tones. Her desire had not been granted freely—unconditionally. She was making a contract with her lover.

They parted at length; and, as is often the case with bargainers, they appeared almost equally dissatisfied with their mutual arrangement.

"Women are slippery fish. I must keep on the alert, or it will be an ugly job. * * I expect I'm a fool," was the muttered soliloquy of the one, as he walked away with gloomy brow, and hands deep in his pockets. "I must outwit him, or I am lost. I wonder if I am in my right mind that I dare attempt it," was the ditto, ditto, of the other, as she took off her white robe with trembling hands, and resumed her usual costume. This happened three days ago.

Bertram has received a letter from Juliet, pushed under the door of his cell, explaining the plan devised for his escape, and already, as intimated, he has consented to make another effort to-night to flee from the chains and gloom that have been so unjustly his portion for the last five years. It is now

seven o'clock, and being late in the year (September) it is already dusking. At nine o'clock he is to steal forth from his cell and from the prison by an unused door, of which Henwick has the key. The directions Juliet gave him in her note were few and simple. "When nine o'clock strikes by the chapel clock" (chapel adjoining the prison) "the door of your cell will be unlocked; open it as softly as possible, walk cautiously along the passage, where a light will be burning; turn to your left, open the first door you see: it will admit you at once into the open. Run swiftly to the fir-wood, which is only half-a-mile distant from your end of the prison, where I will meet you with the swiftest horse I can procure. I will give you further directions when we meet."

He takes the note from the bosom of his jacket and reads it and re-reads it by the fading light, which soon grows too dim to enable him to decipher the writing. He hides it

away again, and sits quietly waiting. Those who have ever anticipated and longed for an event through many days, and weeks, and months know what a solemn calm falls on the spirit as the important crisis draws near. They will remember how anxious, eager, impatient they were as long as the days divided them from their Hope; but when at last the hour was come, when at last they heard the bright wings of their Desire winnowing the air above them, how a sudden stillness—a breathless, thankful pause supervened as their spirits "calmed themselves for the long-wished for end."

Bertram, as he sits waiting in the darkness for the chapel clock to strike nine, might be likened to an Egyptian mummy waiting in eyeless, earless expectancy the "crack of doom."

Mute and motionless, he sits with bent head and hands covering his face—an attitude that has become habitual to him during the last

five years,—for what will perhaps be the last hour-and-a-half of his imprisonment. "Ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding!" He rises up at the sound. Not joyfully, not eagerly, but slowly, almost wearily. He has dreamed of this moment so often; he has pictured it so vividly, and dwelt on it so long. The hope has been so real to him, that now the reality, the fact, the consummation itself seems dull and phantastic beside the glowing visions that have beguiled his solitude. The door yields at his touch. He opens it and stands face to face with Henwick. He starts, but does not speak. The jailor holds up his finger warningly. Bertram, perceiving that he need fear no resistance from him, pursues his way down the dimly-lighted passage, turns to the left, opens the rusty, heavy iron door as noiselessly as he can—it will creak in spite of him—and passes out into the free night air. For a moment he stands irresolute, lifting his white face to the wide starry

sky, and panting distressfully. He must be off, he must flee away; but how to run with these trembling limbs, or find breath when his very life seems to be passing away through his heaving chest in great gasping sighs! For a few paces he totters along out of the shadow of the building that has enclosed him so long in its dreary walls. Then with a faint moan he falls helplessly to the ground. A bird suffered to escape only when its wings are clipped: the cruel wires against which it beat so wildly and so vainly are no longer around it, but now—now that there is no barrier between it and the sunny sky—now that it is free to perch up on the waving tops of the distant trees—a strange leaden weight presses it to the dull earth, never to soar any more, however bravely the breezes blow; never to soar any more, however loudly its companions are calling to it from the distant blue; never to soar any more, however unguarded, however free — powerless, spell-bound, hopelessly help-

less in the first sweet burst of its pined-for liberty. Oh, cruelest woe of all! what can it do but die?

A hand is laid roughly on Bertram's shoulder. "Death at last!" thinks the low-lying captive. Something cold touches his cheek. A pistol? Better so than— But what is this—this cheering smell of wine—this flask pressed against his lips—this reviving, life-giving liquid moistening his parched throat? He swallows eagerly, then opens his eyes to look at his succourer, and sees the dark face of his whilome jailor bending over him.

Henwick holds the flask to Bertram's lips till every drop of wine is drained; then flinging it away, he bids him rise and go. Bertram rises, shakes himself; the opportune draught has given him new strength.

"I must thank—"

"Hush, dolt! it's not for your sake I'm running this damnable risk," snarls his rescuer savagely; "begone!"

CHAPTER V.

"Together we ride!"

LIBERTY OR DEATH.

BERTRAM needs no second bidding; throwing back his head with a sudden movement of glad exultation, he darts away in the direction of the fir-wood. It is but a short distance: already he can see the blackness of the clustering trees, though the moon has not yet risen. In ten minutes' time he is beneath them, listening for some sound or signal from his promised deliverer. He has not long to wait; the welcome sound of "champing bit and pawing hoof" greets his ear almost immediately, and in another moment he is standing by the steed that is to bear him from his doom.

"You are late," whispers Juliet hurriedly; "throw this cloak over your shoulders to hide your dress, and mount as quickly as you can. I have another horse here; I am coming with you to show you the way."

"Coming with me? but the risk, the——"

"Hush! for God's sake don't delay; it is certain death to both of us if we are discovered—worse than death to me if I remain behind. Oh, make haste!—make haste!"

It is no time for arguing or asking reasons. Bertram springs on his horse, and Juliet, with wonderful promptitude, unties a horse that is bound to a tree close by, and mounts it unassisted. Pressing her horse close to Bertram's, she seizes his bridle, and then turning both the horses' heads to the open, urges them to their full speed.

"Every dog has his day." How soon past pain is forgotten in present joy! Juliet, flying away over the wild waste country by the side of the man she loves, has forgotten

all her anguish, all the weariness, the toil, the sorrow of the last five years; all the earlier, keener woe of the mournful tragedy in which she has borne so ill a part. She is by his side for whom she has risked more than life, for whom she has borne slight, insult, and weariness, without complaint. By his side! and though he does not yet know to whom he owes his life and freedom—is not yet aware that the woman riding away in the darkness with him is the one from whom, when he last saw her, he had withheld his forgiveness! Still she has no fear—no doubt, but that her love must prevail at last, when he is free and happy again; when he understands the horrible danger she has run for his sake. When she kneels before him as his rescuer, to ask pardon again for the unintentional wrong of past days, he will raise her in his arms—he will press her to his heart, at last! — at last! Silently they speed along. The cool fresh air is flushing

Bertram's pale face and giving light to his dim eyes. He feels as if he can ride anywhere, for any length of time, without fatigue. Every muscle seems endowed with new strength, all his nerves strung and braced to their highest pitch of daring and endurance.

"Where are we going?" he asks the black-robed, black-veiled woman riding so fearlessly and well at his side.

"To L——," she answers, naming a small village on the coast some twenty miles distant. "A trading vessel has anchored there—it sails to-morrow for England—we must try to get aboard."

"Do you know the captain or any of the crew."

"No; I only know that they are short of hands. If they will not take us we must ride on."

"Where?"

"We will find out at L—— the best direction to take."

Silence again. The moon has risen and is looking down with calm, untroubled eye at the desperate riders. Bertram's horse is the fleetest; he has to check its speed slightly to keep with his companion. Juliet notices it with a pang.

"Am I always to hinder where I could help him," she groans. Then aloud she says: "If you knew the way you could ride on without me. My horse is much slower than yours. I am retarding you."

"I should not think of it," he answers. "You are risking your life for me—we will die or live together."

She does not answer. She urges on her horse to its utmost speed, while her whole soul goes up in an agonized, frantic prayer for their escape, for his last words to be verified, that they may indeed "live together." It is a notable fact that infidels and scoffers, in moments of supreme danger and grief, will call imploringly on the God whose

existence they emphatically deny. Though Juliet is not an infidel, yet she has for years entirely ignored the fact of there being a God, or at any rate a God that had anything to do with her, or her affairs; now, when no act of hers can secure to her the dazzling heaven Hope has shown her—when she is utterly powerless either to seize the happiness hovering near, or to avert the dread disappointment that may be in store—she turns instinctively to the Highest Power—the God whom she has forsworn — forsaken — forgotten—(what a wonderful assurance we all possess of Heaven's mercy and long suffering!) —and prays Him to give her the joy her own wickedness has failed to bring her. Her horse answers to the whip; for a little while it keeps up with Bertram's, neck-and-neck, in a long, tearing gallop. Then again it slackens speed and drops behind. Bertram reins in his horse immediately, but he nearly bites his lip through with impatience at the

check. Juliet urges on her horse again with whip and voice; this time the animal does not respond. With sullenly drooped head and heaving flanks, it relapses from a slow trot into a walk, and then to her infinite dismay stands stock still, snorting with fatigue.

"Your horse is spent," says Bertram; "get down and mount behind me; my animal will carry us both."

"No, no! I shall hamper you; your horse will fail beneath a double burden, and we shall both be lost. Ride on—keep as much as possible in the direction your horse's head is turned to at present, and soon you will see the lights of L—— in the distance. Disguise your convict's dress as much as possible before entering the village. Tie your horse to a tree, where you will be able to regain it if you need it, and walk down to the harbour, where you can make inquiries about your passage."

"I cannot leave you here all alone without ——"

Bertram's expostulations are cut short by the dull sound of horses' hoofs cantering over the turfy waste behind them. They peer into the darkness and listen anxiously. Nothing to be seen, yet still the ominous, thunderous beat.

"We are pursued—Bertram, save yourself!"

The old name, uttered with the old, tender, passionate inflexion! It does not matter if he knows her or not now—now that death is on their track; now that the mad, divinely sweet dream is over. She comes close to his side; she lays her hand on his bridle hand, and looks up at him with the deep eyes that have annoyed him so often with the undisguised fervour of their glance. She has not had a real look at him during all these five long years. She has been obliged to deny herself the heart-reviving delight

of meeting the dark eyes she has felt gazing at her so kindly and so often. She meets them now. Her hungry longing to peer into their depths is gratified for a little moment, and even in her dire terror and despair, in the Shadow of Death itself, a mystical thrill of exquisite joy passes through her worn heart. Bertram looks down on the upturned, beautiful face, into the rapt impassioned eyes, and recognizes the woman who has been his doom—"Juliet!"

As if in answer to his ejaculation, the sharp report of a pistol wakens the echoes of the lonely spot; and as Juliet's horse falls on its side with a groan as of human agony, Bertram's rears frantically, neighs in wild affright, and darts off into the darkness with its rider. Juliet is thrown to the ground by the sudden wrenching away of Bertram's hand. She has only just time to pick herself up before a man on horseback gallops up and pulls rein beside her. A pistol in

his hand, with one of its barrels still smoking, shows from whence came the bullet that laid her horse low. It is levelled now at Juliet's own head.

"Ha! you do not escape me! Move an inch, and you are a dead woman," says a voice she knows—a voice she loathes.

She is at the mercy of the man she has deceived, and cajoled and ruined; and Henwick the jailor is not a man likely to forgive an injury, or spare an enemy. He looks terribly in earnest as he holds the pistol a yard from the girl's head—the girl for whom he has given up all he had to give with a reckless devotion worthy a knight of romance—the girl he has ventured his life to possess, and lost—no! not that yet; she is still in his power, she shall die—or——

The moon's face is not colder, whiter, calmer, than Juliet's, as she fronts the deadly weapon held by her infuriated lover's hand. The man's will wavers as he meets the dark,

defiant eyes that look up at him with—oh! such a different expression than that they held a moment since, looking up in the other face that has vanished into the night!

"If you have another bullet in your pistol," she says in her low sweet voice, "shoot this poor brute" (pointing to the struggling horse beside her), "and put him out of his agony."

"How merciful you are!" (with a hoarse laugh). "I am merciful too. I have reserved a bullet to put through your damnably false heart, which is far too good a fate for a she-devil like you."

"Aim just here, then" (placing her hand upon her breast), "and be quick about it."

He raises his pistol, then lowers it with an impatient grunt. It is no use, he cannot shoot the beautiful woman standing before him with white face and fearless eyes—she-devil though she be. He cannot—*he cannot.* Women are commonly supposed to be more

pitiful than men ; they are favouritely alluded to as the "softer sex." All I know is, if the member of the softer sex, that stands so dauntlessly and helplessly before Henwick at the present moment, as he points the pistol at her head, had that self-same weapon in her hand for the space of one moment, he would be a dead man. Juliet notices the signs of relenting, and smiles half-mockingly. What irresolute apes men are ! is her inward thought, all save that one galloping away—miles away by this time, to his freedom. She can afford to trifle with her life. It is not worth much, she feels, as different alternatives of misery present themselves to her as her fate should she survive the present danger. So with the reckless courage of one who has lost at the same time fear and hope, she asks tauntingly—

"Is it wise of you to linger, Mr. Henwick ? Is there not some penalty exacted for a breach of duty such as you have been guilty

of to-night? If you take my advice you will drop the "heroic" (signifying with a mocking gesture the pistol in his hand), "and make yourself scarce with the greatest expedition possible."

For all answer, he flings himself from his horse and approaches her where she stands a little aloof, helpless, and white, and fearless, with a dare-devil smile on her full lips. She does not attempt to flee from him, nor does she struggle when he grasps her shoulders roughly with his hot hands.

"You are at my mercy," he hisses between his clenched teeth; his eyes savage and desperate, fastened on her face; his hot, quick breath scorching her cheek. "I am going to ride to L—— to-night. I shall either take you with me, or shoot you where you stand. You have deceived me, ruined me" (his grasp tightens cruelly, his face works with fury); "either you shall make good your promise of fleeing with me to-

night as my wife, or—or I will be revenged, by G—d I will!"

"Did you wait long at the trysting-place? I hope you didn't find it very tedious!" she asks, with mad raillery.

When a woman has once lost care of herself, there is positively no limit to her foolhardy daring.

"When did the brilliant idea occur to you that I had chosen another companion for my flight?"

"Stop your d—d jibing!" he cries, striking the beautiful, deriding lips with rough force, "and answer me—Yes, or no."

"What a tender wooer!—what gentle persuasiveness!" sneer the bruised lips, quivering and curling with scornful irony.

"Yes, or no!"

"Is it possible that the hint I have given you to-night is too fine for even your delicate perception to interpret? or do you think I have been labouring under a delusion during

the last two hours, and have been riding by Bertram Messeter's side, fancying all the time he was the brave, stalwart Henwick, my affianced husband, with whom I was fleeing away to distant climes, to live happily evermore ?"

The man's bronzed, weather-beaten face turns a sickly white with deadly tigerish rage. He lifts the pistol and presses the loaded barrel against the low white brow of his tormentor.

"Answer !" he mutters, in a voice hoarse and choked as that of a half-strangled man.

"Will nothing but the truth, spoken in so many words, inform your brute-like incapacity? Take it then—I abhor you, and choose death as infinitely preferable to your society."

"Your blood be upon your own head !" he cries ; then throwing his arms about her in a last embrace, he crushes her to his heart, kissing her bleeding, writhing lips and beau-

tiful distorted face, in a paroxysm of wild-beast passion. Juliet struggles frantically. Her hands are free: they are searching for something in the bodice of her dress—they have found it, they clutch it! The jailor's arms encircle her neck, and the pistol-barrel, held carelessly in his left-hand, is pointing straight at his own head. As Juliet lifts her stiletto with intent to strike, there is a sharp report, and they both fall heavily to the ground. The thin puff of smoke clears away —a sickly smell of powder taints the sweet night-air. Juliet disengages herself from the arms that are powerless to hold her now, and stands looking down with mingled horror and relief on the corpse of the man who has loved her (coarse and sensual though that love has been) better than his life.

"He was young to have died so," she mutters at length. "I wonder had he a mother?"

CHAPTER VI.

"Standing, with reluctant feet,
Where the brook and river meet."
—*Longfellow.*

DAY-DREAMS.

FIVE years have again elapsed since the events recorded in the last chapter. I shall not trouble to reintroduce the reader to the different characters that have thus far played their part in this story. When he, or she, meets them in the succeeding pages, they may (if they recognise them—five years of chance and change make this supposition a doubtful one) advance and shake hands with the confidence of "old acquaintances." If not—if they cannot trace a likeness or discover an identity—they have only to follow this tale to

its close: a revelation will certainly be vouchsafed before the curtain falls.

On the borders of the Menai Straits there stand many stately, old-fashioned English homes, hiding amongst trees, or looking down with wide open-windowed-placidity on velvety lawns and gay sweet parterres of flowers. Very peaceful, very serene, these homesteads appear, this quiet July evening, from the water below. A gentleman seated in a row-boat, that is drifting quietly on the shining flood, is apparently struck by the peculiar charm of the tranquil scene, for he has taken out his sketching-book, and is painting the houses and the trees and the gardens on the bank opposite him with grave rapidity. It is hardly a subject that a professional artist would choose to make a sketch of. He would probably call it tame, hackneyed, unsuggestive, and all the other derogatory terms painters fling at inoffensive landscapes whose beauty appeals more to

the heart than the eye. That the present sketcher is no artist by profession, whatever he may be by nature, his painting apparatus plainly declare, viz., a child's toy colour-box, with half the paints missing; a tea-cup with a broken handle to hold the water; a paint-brush of dubious hair, certainly not the orthodox camel's; and lastly, the material on which the sketch is being produced—a bit of cartridge-paper, supported on the sketcher's knees by means of a dilapidated volume of Virgil. The only other occupant of the boat is a small, pale boy of some ten years, to whom the toy paint-box belongs, leaning listlessly over the side of the boat, dabbling his frail hands in the warm, softly-heaving water.

"Have you learned all your lessons for to-morrow, Louis?" asks the gentleman, without raising his head; "because, if not, we must be going in. It is nearly six o'clock."

"No," answers the boy, drowsily; "I have

not learned them. I can't without Maizie, and she has been away all day."

"I don't approve of your sister helping you in your studies, you know that very well," is the somewhat stern rejoinder; "but as you ignore my plainly-expressed wish about it, I shall speak to Miss Brooklyn herself."

"Oh, M. Valance, don't be cross; it's not so much the actual help she gives me, as—as—" (stumbling and stuttering as he tries to express a thought somewhat too large for his limited childish vocabulary)—"her being there, you know, in the room."

The boy steps over the intervening seat, and seating himself by his tutor, lays a sodden hand pleadingly on his arm. M. Valance still keeps his head bent over his drawing.

"You mean your sister's presence gives you energy and inclination to apply yourself to your tasks?"

"Yes, sir, just that," says the boy, de-

lighted to hear his own misty feelings put into words.

"Louis! Louis! you will never be a man at this rate. Why don't you try and learn to stand by yourself? I wish you had half your sister's independence," says the tutor, shaking his head gravely, as he mixes some purple and green to try and catch the colour of the cloud floating stilly above the trees and houses.

"Is Maizie independent?"

"She knows how to stand alone. The tasks I give her are always well prepared—she does not seek anyone's assistance."

"She's a darling!" interrupts Louis, impetuously. "I don't believe she has a fault."

"That she has," asserts M. Valance, curtly.

"I don't believe it! Tell me some."

"What was it, do you think, caused her to slam the schoolroom door this morning, when she went to dress for the carriage?"

The dark moustache of the sketcher twitches a little at the remembrance.

"She does not like driving, sir; she was a little put out."

"Exactly: your sister has a quick temper, and has not yet learned to control it."

"But she went, after all. I don't call that a fault," objects the brother-partisan.

"Nevertheless, it is a very great fault. Can you tell me why your father, Sir Richard, sent her to her own room last Wednesday evening?"

"Papa asked her to play that piece she is so fond of, while all the people were talking so loudly, and she wouldn't."

"Miss Maizie is self-willed," remarks the tutor, quietly.

"No, she isn't!" cries the boy, earnestly; "it was because papa asked her to do what she didn't like. She always does what she is asked when—"

"When she chooses!" The dark face is

lifted at length with a sudden gleaming smile. It is gone in a moment, and then M. Valance adds, as he lays his hand kindly on his pupil's shoulder, "Never mind, my boy! your sister is very young, and, like yourself, has plenty of time to improve."

"I don't believe she can improve," says Louis Brooklyn, thoughtfully; "to me she seems perfect. Do you think it is because I love her so, M. Valance?"

"Do you love her very much?"

"More than anybody."

"My dear boy, you have only known her for three months!"

Again the tutor raises his head to gaze at his pupil. While he does so, we may take the opportunity of examining his physiognomy.

Handsome? yes, decidedly, at the first glance; at the second, one discovers that the features are not cut and rounded with the nicety the term implies. There is a certain ruggedness about them; a heavy, dark-brown

moustache effectually conceals the mouth, except when it widens in a smile, which is not often, judging from the somewhat stern cast of the face; the eyes are dark and large, capable of shedding stern lights, no doubt, but their wonted expression is kindly and earnest. There is some amusement in their grave depths as they rest on the pale boyish face close to them.

"Only three months," repeats Louis, with unusual firmness in his voice; "yet I certainly love her better than anyone in the world."

"How do you know?"

The boy laughs a little at the question, as he takes off his straw hat and tosses back the fair straight hair from his delicate blue-veined forehead.

"How do you know?" repeats M. Valance.

"Louis!" calls a clear voice—"Louis!"

"That's her voice!" cries the boy, starting up with a vehemence that causes the boat to

rock from side to side. "I don't see her anywhere; do you?" he asks, after looking vainly along the narrow strip of shingle that intervenes between the water and a plantation belonging to some house higher up, the chimneys of which peer out from above the trees. M. Valance's dark eyes are also searching for the owner of the voice, but without success.

"No, I can't see her," he says. "However, it's time for us to be going in. Let's pull ashore and look for her: she isn't far off."

Again the fresh girlish voice, calling with a mocking, mischievous inflexion in its clear tones, "Louis! Louis!"

M. Valance puts down his half-finished sketch and the book on which it has been reposing at the bottom of the boat, and telling his pupil to pack up the dilapidated paint-box, he takes both oars. One or two vigorous strokes sends the little boat grating on the

shingle. Louis jumps out, and drags it further up; M. Valance follows with his book and sketch. After dragging the boat up out of reach of the tide, they look about, puzzled and laughing, for traces of the girl whose voice the salt sea-breezes has wafted to them so mysteriously. Again it sounds, quite close to them this time: "Louis! Louis!"

"She's behind that," asserts M. Valance, pointing to the high boundary-wall of the plantation.

As a corroboration of his words, the bright young face of Maizie Brooklyn peers over the grey old stones.

"Maizie! Maizie! how did you get there? What are you standing on? How will you get over?" questions her young brother, all in a breath.

"I came this way for a short cut, and then found there was no opening at the bottom. After a great deal of trouble, I managed to climb upon the branch of a tree—I'm on it

now—and look over. I saw you in the boat, and then I bobbed down behind the wall, and called you. I thought you'd wonder where the voice came from."

"Do you know you are trespassing?" asks M. Valance, gravely.

"Yes; I know this wood belongs to Captain Brace. Never mind! I dare say he'll forgive me. I can't be prosecuted the first time, you know—only warned off."

"Well, you can't get over, so you had better be going back."

"Oh, M. Valance!" (in tones of real distress)—"I have already nearly torn my best silk dress to rags!—the brambles and stumps of trees and dead branches catch in it every step I take."

"You don't mean to say you have been running through the wood in your best dress?"

"Yes, of course; I hadn't time to change

it. I have only just come back from the drive."

"If you can get to the top of the wall, I'll help you down this side, Maizie," volunteers Louis, eagerly.

"That's a good boy; but I don't know if I can get up. I'll try."

"No, no! you'll only hurt yourself," interposes the tutor, decidedly. "Tuck your skirts up as well as you can, and make the best of your way back. Come along, Louis; we are late."

"Oh, Louis, don't go yet!—do just let me see if I can't get over," says Maizie's imploring voice from the other side of the wall.

She is trying to find an easy place to climb. Ah! now she has it!—a tree growing close to the wall, one branch hanging over. She'll be up in a trice!

"Louis, I'm coming! I've found a tree!"

"Do wait, sir!" pleaded Louis, as M. Va-

lance moves away—"just a moment, to see if she can get up."

"I'm just up!" (pantingly). A delicate hand, covered with rings, appears on the top of the wall. Crash! crash!—a half-smothered scream—the hand disappears suddenly.

"Oh, Maizie, Maizie! are you hurt?"

"Miss Brooklyn, why will you persist in trying to do what you are told not?"

So, master and pupil respectively, in tones of dismay and irritation. For all answer, sounds of irrepressible merriment.

"She isn't hurt—she's laughing!" utters Louis, satisfiedly.

"Miss Maizie, we are going; so if you wish to break your neck, you will have to do so without spectators to cheer the performance."

"Oh, do wait! I trod on a rotten branch by mistake, and it broke; but I'm not hurt." Again the soft, infectious laughter.

"More luck than judgment," pronounces the tutor.

The white hand is laid on the rough wall again; then a brown-gold head peers above it; then another hand, grasping an overhanging branch; and finally Miss Brooklyn herself is deposited in a somewhat constrained attitude on the top of the ivy-hung six-foot boundary.

"Louis, do you think you can help me down?" she asks, looking with apprehensive eyes on her small brother. M. Valance has vanished.

"Hang your legs over," directs Louis, "and then perhaps they'll reach my shoulders, and then—"

"And then—what then? what good would that be, you stupid boy?" interrupts the girl, impatiently; for a qualm comes over her as she looks at the hard shingle below. "I shall have to jump, I suppose."

"Oh, no! no! don't attempt it—you'd be dashed to pieces!" cries Louis, in anxious exaggeration.

"Pooh! the worst I can do is to sprain my ankle."

"I'll go and call M. Valance to help you."

"This will never do," says Maizie to herself, as her brother vanishes in pursuit of his tutor. "I *will* get down by myself, and I would rather sprain my ankle than be lifted down like a child by that grave M. Valance." (Maizie is nearly seventeen). "I know what I'll do—I'll slide down; it's no matter how much leg I show; there's nobody to see; and it's the safest way."

Rather a bold undertaking for a dainty young lady in a silk dress! Maizie Brooklyn, however, is no town-bred damsel, stiff of limb and flaccid of muscle. All her life long she has been accustomed to hedges and ditches, and hills and dales. Divested of her clinging skirts and hindering fringes, she would be a match for any schoolboy in sure-footed activity. Still holding by the branch, she turns herself round, and lowers her feet over the

wall, then her legs, then her body. Oh, dear! oh, dear! how far off is she from the ground? She has let go the branch, and is holding to a root of ivy on the top of the wall. If she should sprain her ankle, and lame herself for her birthday dance next week!

"Maizie! Maizie!" Her brother is coming back, with M. Valance. She would rather die than be found in such an ignominious position. Here goes! The strong little hands unclasp, and Maizie slides to the shingle with some velocity. She is up again before they can assist her—up again, and laughing at them.

"Ain't you hurt at all?—are you quite sure?" asks Louis, clinging to her.

"Not in the very least," she answers, throwing her arm round him caressingly.

I have called them brother and sister; yet, as they stand together, not a shadow of likeness can be traced between them. Brother

and sister they are, yet not a drop of the same blood flows in their veins. Sir Richard Brooklyn has been married twice; Maizie is the daughter of his first wife, Louis the son of the late Captain Finche, whose widow is the present Lady Brooklyn. Louis has straw-coloured hair, light blue eyes, and pale insignificant features. Maizie's eyes are large and clear, and grey—the soft blue grey of the evening mist among her native mountains. Her features are almost perfect—the provoking "almost" is represented in this case by Maizie's mouth. Measured by an artist's pencil, it is a quarter of an inch too wide, in proportion to the rest of her features; measured by other men's eyes, its length and breadth and sweetness are complete. The most fastidious eyes of crotchetest connoisseur could not find a fault with the rest of her "flower-like" face: a straight, aristocratic little nose, with delicate dilating nostrils; a rounded, dimpled chin; a brow full,

fair, free, that "looked like marble and smelt like myrrh;" and lastly, a glorious "crown of womanhood," rare, rippling golden hair streaming below her waist. As she stands, her arms about her brother, cheeks flushed, lips smiling, she makes as fair and fresh a vision as a man's eye could rest on. Her hat is lying at her feet. M. Valance stoops and picks it up. The long ostrich feather is broken, the straw is bent and crumpled. The tutor looks at the ill-used head gear, and then he looks at its owner.

"Behold the perfect specimen of womanhood!" he says smilingly, as his eye rests on her tossed hair and torn dress.

"What do you mean, M. Valance?"

"Louis there has been declaring you to be a black swan, and a four-leaved shamrock, and—"

"I'm sure I haven't," interrupts Louis, indignantly; "I only said—"

"That she was perfect — no faint praise that, eh, Miss Maizie?"

"Silly boy!" pinching her brother's cheek —"don't you know there's not such a thing as perfection in the world?"

"Of what use is the word, then?" asks Louis.

"To describe our dreams, I suppose—to express the glory that is hidden—"

The girl's grey eyes are looking over the sunlit water to the opposite shore and distant mountains with a wistful, almost sad, yearning. There is silence for a few moments, and when the soft gray eyes return from their wanderings, they encounter a pair of dark, inscrutable orbs, that rather disconcert them.

"Are you a visionary, Miss Brooklyn?" asks M. Valance.

"No;—at least, I don't quite know what a visionary is."

"One who dreams—one who builds castles in the air, and finds more pleasure in that un-

substantial occupation than in the performance of the everyday duties of real life."

"Then I'm not a visionary because I take a great deal more interest in real life than in —in——"

"Than in the fairy regions of youthful imagination?"

"Yes, but it's pleasant sometimes to dream of impossible things, even when" (rather timidly) "one knows they are impossible."

"Of course—of course; it is perhaps the most to be envied of all the sweet privileges that belong to the April of life."

And they are not a few, thinks M. Valance, as he gazes at the unclouded brow and eyes of the girl before him.

"Come," he adds, abruptly, "we must be going home; here is your hat."

She takes it from him without a word, and places it on her bright head in an absent manner. They walk on in silence for some distance.

"What are you thinking about Miss Maizie?" asks M. Valance at length, glancing at the serious young face longside of him. "Are you building a fairy castle, or are you sailing on a moon-lit sea with a fairy knight?"

"No!" (lifting up earnest child-like eyes) "I am not dreaming, I'm thinking quite seriously."

"What about?"

"I'd rather not tell you yet, I want to think more about it—I'll tell you to-night."

"Very well."

Dinner is over at Castle Grange. Sir Richard is sitting by himself over his wine. Lady Brooklyn is sitting placidly in the depths of an arm-chair in the drawing-room, awaiting the advent of her lord.

"Maizie," she says, "you can ring for lights, this twilight is so depressing."

Silence follows this mandate and observa-

tion. Lady Brooklyn's silk dress rustles, and Lady Brooklyn's fat neck creases as she turns in her chair to look at the low French-window where her step-daughter was sitting a moment since. She is not there now—the window is wide open, and out on the dusky ground beyond, Lady Brooklyn sees the flutter and gleam of a white dress. "Maizie!" (in a feeble, wheezy, after-dinner voice). Perhaps her name does not reach the girl; however this may be, the white dress recedes, lessens, and finally vanishes in the deep twilight of the overhanging trees that guard the lawn. On a rustic bench under one of these trees M. Valance is seated smoking a meditative cigar. Louis has retired to rest; the boy being delicate, is sent to bed at eight o'clock in the evening. The remaining three hours of the evening are at the tutor's own disposal. The day has been sultry—the air is now cool and pleasant. M. Valance takes the cigar from between his lips and sighs long and

heavily. It is not an impatient sigh, nor a tired sigh, nor a lazy sigh, nor a satisfied sigh, nor an apprehensive sigh, nor a regretful sigh; it is simply a sad sigh—sad as the low breath of an autumn wind above a lonely, forgotten grave. Perhaps the soft gloom, the tender silence, the regretful scent of the dew-laden flowers (why do flowers smell so sadly at night?) are stirring in his heart the strange deep melancholy which lurks in every breast. The causeless infinite sadness that only waits for a hush or pause in the restless hurry of our lives to oppress and paralyse our souls. We arrive all panting and triumphant at the top of some hard-won hill. We sit down a little space to rest and be happy before proceeding on our toilsome journey. We will just gaze at the sunset, we will just count the pretty flowers we gathered as we came along. Ah me!—ah me! what is it? This sudden clouding of our happy eyes, these flowers dropping from our nerveless hands. Just

when we *might* be happy. Just when our individual cares and vexations have left us breathing space—behold! the shadow of the unveiled Sphinx—the awful majestic sorrow of the Immortal swathed in Death. But M. Valance may have private long-buried sorrows of his own that we know nothing of. He may be remembering some sweet dead hope, over whose grave the years have strewn a kindly moss of new thoughts, new interests, new purposes, but which to-night the quiet fingers of the twilight breeze have displaced, causing the mournful almost forgotten epitaph to peer through. "M. Valance!" Is it a voice from the grave? Has his lost desire risen softly from her long sleep, and stolen to his heart once more; or is it a fairer, sweeter hope that has come to him, in glimmering white, through the dusky night, to call him from his vigil by the dead, to the fresh joys of a new life.

"M. Valance!" At the reiteration of his

name, the tutor starts slightly, and looks up at the fair, fair face peering at him through the shadows. "Ah, who is the dreamer now? I have been standing here for the last five minutes, and you have not once moved—and look, your cigar has gone out."

"All the same, Miss Maizie, I have not been dreaming—I am too old to indulge in that delicious pastime," says M. Valance, rising from the twisted couch and motioning his pupil to be seated.

"No thank you, I have been sitting for the last hour and a half—O how *I do* hate dinner! Papa doesn't talk, and lady—mamma doesn't talk, and those solemn idiots in plush stalk about like a couple of superannuated chickens, offering one things one doesn't want, till I feel inclined to scream, or throw my glass at papa's head, or do something desperate, just to make a diversion."

"But then Sir Richard often has someone to dine with him—it is better then?"

"Yes, certainly there is not that dreadful silence, as if we were taking the sacrament; but it is always long and tiresome, I'm always glad when it is over."

"You are too impatient; to learn how to be bored with a good grace is one of the most important of the many social arts you will have to learn."

"I shall never learn it!" (impetuously); "but M. Valance that was not what I wanted to talk to you about; I saw you sitting out here when I was in the drawing-room, and I thought I would come and ask you."

"Well?"

M. Valance has relighted his cigar, and is leaning against a tree with an easy nonchalant attitude that our countrymen miss so in their lounging postures.

"About what I was thinking of as we walked from the beach this afternoon."

"Ah, yes—what you were cogitating so deeply—you promised to tell me."

"I was wondering if it was—" "were" corrects the tutor, "if it were right to dream about one's future life—to picture and plan, and fancy things that may never happen."

"Right! why should it be wrong?"

The girl does not answer immediately. She looks up at the darkening sky, where the far, faint stars are beginning to quiver, and at the tops of the stately trees, waving gently in the cool night wind, and shivers.

"Miss Maizie, you are cold! you should not have come out in this thin dress; I will fetch you a shawl."

"Stay," she says, laying a retaining hand upon his arm. "I am not cold, not in the least—feel" (holding out her hand towards him.

He touches the warm, soft palm with the tips of his fingers.

"Then what makes you shiver," he asks.

"My thoughts. Oh, M. Valance I'm so afraid sometimes—so afraid."

The pretty hands clasp each other, and the large grey eyes grow solemn and awed.

"What of?"

M. Valance throws away the end of his cigar, and looks attentively at the beautiful face; but the dark eyes have learned to keep their own counsel, they do not betray the least surprise.

"That God will be angry at my dreaming such happy dreams about my future life. You see I have no excuse, my present life is so happy, and it seems like stealing joy. He may mean the coming years to be dark and dreary."

M. Valance does not smile at the crude morbidity of the girl's fancy. He raises his hat slightly from his head, and is silent a moment or two, while the cool air fans his massive brow, and lightly lifts the dark hair clustering round it.

"Do you indulge in these day-dreams often?"

"Yes, very often, very, very often," confesses Maizie penitently, with bowed head.

"They do not interfere with your daily duties. I have noticed your lessons are always well prepared, and your music and singing you devote some hours of each day to practice?"

"Yes; but, Oh! M. Valance, I find such a lot of time for dreaming, and even while I am practising and learning my lessons, I am imagining pleasant combinations of events. You see I get a happiness that is not perhaps *meant* for me—the future as well as the present—for you know what Shakspeare says—'Hope to joy is little less in joy, than hope enjoyed.'"

"But it *is* less — no matter how vivid the dream or fancy, it lacks the life, the consciousness of reality; and then, how soon it fades—no—no! Heaven holds its favours fast; we cannot steal our joy!"

As he utters these last words M. Valance

quits his lounging posture, and stands erect, looking down on the girl with eyes stern and sad as those of a warrior looking on his dead.

Maizie shrinks a little away from him.

"Then you do not think it is wrong?" she asks, softly.

"Are your dreams so dear to you?"

"They are pleasant, very pleasant, but it is not that; I'm afraid I can't help the habit. I've tried, and it seems no use," and the wide, innocent eyes look up as grievedly remorseful as a penitent child's."

"Don't try any more, Miss Maizie, your imagination is God's own gift; the pleasure you derive from it, is His gift also. I do not ask you what your dreams are about, for I know. I know the quick, bright visions—the pure, unearthly hopes—the wild, delicious fancies—the divine, deep reveries; all the thousand thrilling vagaries that belong to this most sweet madness of a new-awakened

ardent soul, for I have felt them." (M. Valance moves from under the shadow of the tree and lays a hand lightly on the young girl's shoulder; there is a curious thrill in his grave voice, and his dark eyes soften and glisten as he continues). "Our God is not a harsh tyrant, Miss Maizie. He is very gracious, tender and merciful. He does not grudge us joy. He does not willingly afflict. Take the good gifts he has dowered you with and be thankful; take them without fear—dreams and realities—hopes and facts. Don't be afraid of your happiness, it is legitimate, it is Heaven, sent like the free wind and the pure rain!"

The girl's eyes grow clear, her cheek flushes softly. "I am glad," she sighs contentedly —"I am glad to think so." Then, after a pause: "M. Valance—"

"Well!"

"You have dreamed and hoped, you say,

long ago;—have they come true, your old dreams—your old hopes?"

The tutor turns away—she cannot see his face. His fingers feel for a withered rose-bud in the breast of his coat. He holds it forth to her; and as he holds it forth the night-wind scatters its shrivelled petals at her feet.

"It was fresh and fair this morning," he says—"only this morning! Yet do not mistake me: I do not regret it having bloomed;—the memory of its sweetness lives."

Then dropping the stalk carelessly, he holds out his hand to her:

"Good night, Miss Maizie—you must not stay out here any longer, and don't let other people's experiences shadow your spirit. Remember, human portions differ as widely as human faces."

Without a word she gives him her hand, but her soft lips quiver as she turns and

walks away over the dewy grass. M. Valance looks after the slight receding figure, and lifts his hat. "God bless her pure heart!" he utters reverently, "and shield it from sin and sorrow."

CHAPTER VII.

"The beauty of this new-awakened soul
Affrights me!" . : . .

GUINEVERE.

"WELL, Maizie, what are you going to do on your birthday? I understand it is to be a festal day," asks Sir Richard, as he saunters round his pretty garden after breakfast, with his arm through his daughter's.

"First of all we intend having some scenes from Tennyson's Idylls, and then a supper, and then a dance," answers Maizie. "Oh, papa!" she adds immediately, "do look at that lovely rose—there, that crimson one with the dew on it!—I must pick it."

Sir Richard pauses on the smooth, weedless gravel-walk, and watches her with a

tender smile in his stern blue eyes, as she bounds over the close-cut turf and trim flower-beds. It is easy to see that his new-found daughter is the apple of the old man's eye. She is by his side again in a moment, the gathered rose in her hand.

"Isn't it lovely, with the morning dew upon it?" she asks, holding it to his tanned and wrinkled face, which contrasts unfavourably with its glowing tints. "Smell it!—it is so fresh and sweet!"

"Charming!" he answers; but though he buries his aristocratic nose in the flower, his eyes are on the happy young face upturned to his, as he utters the commendatory adjective.

"I'm going to pin it in your coat, papa; mind you take care of it."

Sir Richard submits to the operation with tolerable grace. The slight, eager fingers are some time over their task.

"Especially with the morning dew upon

it," remarks the baronet, absently, looking down on his daughter's bright head.

"What are you talking about, papa?" (lifting flushed cheeks and laughing eyes).

"Give me a kiss!" is Sir Richard's irrelevant reply.

"Can't just now; you must wait till I've finished."

"You are so long!" grumble the grey-moustached lips.

A few moments' silence, during which a large fly walks over Sir Richard's nose, and he daren't move to brush it off.

"There, poor patient old man! it's beautifully settled at last!"

"Give the patient old man his reward, then, you disrespectful girl!"

Maizie obediently raises her soft mouth, sweeter than any rose-bud, though not in the least like one, while her sire stoops and avails himself of a father's privilege.

"So you are going to have a dance, eh?" he asks, as they wander on.

"Yes; won't it be fun? I've asked such a lot of people!"

"Whom have you asked?"

"Oh, the Miss Wilsons—three, you know; the Tompsons, brother and sister; the Jameses, two sisters, one brother; the De Lacys, a sister, brother, and a cousin; the three Arundel boys, for Louis; and then mamma has asked a whole lot more. I don't know their names, even—Sir John and Lady Field and Captain Brace are amongst them."

"Ah! you'll have quite a large gathering. Let me see: how old will you be on that day?"

"Seventeen."

"H'mm! next year, about this time, you'll be in the thick of your first London season, I suppose."

"Dear! dear! how short my childhood has seemed!" sighs Maizie. "I shan't marry

for ever so long yet," she adds to herself, in a low voice; "it is all up when once one does that."

Sir Richard catches the murmured words, and laughs. "What's all up?" he asks.

"All the fun, and the liberty, and the carelessness. Oh, I should hate to be married!" and Maizie tosses back her golden hair, and rears her slender neck like a young colt when first it catches sight of the halter the breaker-in holds behind him, the while he stretches out a wooing hand.

"And I should hate to have you married," says Sir Richard, fondly. "Let us hope that the dreadful calamity won't overtake you for some few years yet."

"I shan't let it," says Maizie, with a gay shake of her bright head. "And now, papa, I must leave you to continue your peregrinations solus; I've got such a lot of things to prepare for the day after to-morrow."

So saying, she flits from his side, noiseless

and swift as a butterfly. Sir Richard turns himself about to look after her—hesitates—walks on listlessly, as if the pretty garden has grown dull and monotonous all at once; stops again, sighs, and finally takes out his silver cigar-case, and proceeds to console himself with that gentle soother of man's minor miseries, a roll of dried tobacco-leaves. O much-abused narcotic! surely thy evil influences and injurious effects are compensated by thy one supreme power of tranquillising anxiety and numbing grief! A little hard, it seems, that society forbids thy consolations to the most nervous, most suffering half of humanity, leaving the calmer, duller portion free to indulge in the sweet luxury ever to their detriment! Husband and wife have a quarrel; husband out in the garden half-an-hour afterwards smoking off his ill-temper and remorse at the same time. Wife up-stairs, crying her eyes and sobbing her heart out. Whether of the two, think you,

will have the most appetite for their dinner this evening? An expensive luxury—smoking? Not so expensive as tears, my friend. Ask the doctor how much of your life passes away in those warm salt drops and terrible sobbing breaths. And there is another alternative for those who do not weep, when the natural water-courses are dry and the river of grief has overflowed its banks, and is washing down the delicate structure of brain-work—ask the mad-house keeper what he charges per diem for a private patient.

Dear me, what a digression! and all the time we have left Sir Richard quietly lighting a weed on the broad sunny walk leading down from the grass terrace before the dining-room windows. He does not look in very desperate case as he puffs away, destroying the fragrance of the crimson rose in his button-hole, and keeping the midges at bay—a tall, gentlemanly man, clad in summer suit of grey, with a proud, soldierly bearing,

not surprising—Richard Brooklyn, when he sold out twenty years ago, was the smartest officer in his regiment. An eye to "threaten and command," one of those steel-blue orbs that could flash as keenly as his sword-blade did long ago, when he flung it above his head and gave the word of command on Wimbledon Common; a thick grey moustache—not iron-grey, but the whitish-grey that fair hair turns; a thin nose, a little like his daughter's, especially when the fine nostrils dilate and quiver; a firm chin; and lastly, an abundance of whitish-grey hair, not clipped close after the fashion of the present day, but hanging loose and shaggy as a lion's mane. He looks older than his years: a residence abroad, and great domestic trouble, has perhaps helped to whiten his hair and furrow his face. He is only fifty. Anyone looking on him would guess him at least a decade older. What could have possessed him to marry the present Lady Brooklyn is a matter for the

wildest conjecture. Men, when their hearts are sore and their pride hurt, are apt to do strange things.

Sir Richard met Mrs. Finche abroad, not long after his proud heart had received a deadly wound, his proud spirit a mortal blow. The heart bled inwardly, the spirit quailed in secret. Sir Richard's light-blue eyes met men's clearly and fearlessly as of old: they did not cloud or droop—only a stern, cold light came into them, like a thin coating of ice over a lake, not thick enough to prevent it reflecting the blue heavens. The black beady orbs of Captain Finche's relict looked beyond the frosty surface of the Baronet's cold-blue eyes—even to a certain estate in North Wales, annual revenue fifteen thousand. Perhaps the lady herself, being somewhat stout and liberal in form, possessed the amount of animal heat requisite to thaw the chill indifference of the stern old soldier. At any rate, when their acquaintance was two months old

Sir Richard led the buxom widow to the altar, and swore to love and cherish her. As to whether he has kept the first vow, there *may* be different opinions about that—who agrees on the signification of the term?—but about the second there could be no two opinions.

Sir Richard was a good husband. To the surprise, and it must be confessed to the disappointment of his new-made bride, he announced his intention, soon after the wedding, of living abroad. Italy was the locality chosen by the baronet for his future residence, and accordingly, after a honeymoon trip to Switzerland, Sir Richard, the new Lady Brooklyn, and her little two-year-old son, went to live in that far-famed city poetically alluded to as the Bride of the Sea.

Quite recently—within the last year—the baronet became suddenly desirous of returning to England. He wanted to see how the old place looked after so many years, he said;

besides, the climate would suit their boy's health better, now that he was getting out of childhood. Lady Brooklyn was nothing loth; indeed her dream since first she sought her lord's favour had been to preside over the board of a certain stately mansion on the banks of the Menai Straits, viz., Castle Grange.

The Baronet preceded his wife and son to England, to see that the place was in order and get things ready, he said; and when Lady Brooklyn and son at length set foot on her husband's lovely estate, she found everything in readiness—the place itself dressed in its spring garb of "living green," and a lovely young girl of sixteen standing under the old-fashioned porch waiting to greet her new mother.

Lady Brooklyn, not being of an emotional temperament, behaved with admirable self-possession. She patted the girl's cheek, kissed her, walked into the spacious drawing-

room, looked out on the velvet lawn, and finally sank luxuriantly into a gorgeous arm-chair, remarking with half-playful petulance to her husband, as he stood before her with his arm round his daughter's neck:

"Too bad of you not to have told me before! It would have been something to look forward to during all these weary miles of travel."

"Couldn't tell you what I didn't know myself, my dear," was her lord's defence. "It is only since the day before yesterday that I have been certain I possessed such a thing as a daughter."

There the matter dropped; Lady Brooklyn seemed to consider her husband's want of confidence accounted for, though it is just possible that she asked a few particulars anent this new daughter of hers, about the time of night that Mrs. Caudle found convenient for her far-famed lectures. To the girl herself she was uniformly kind, but she

has not yet found the way to Maizie's heart. It would be very hard to imagine two natures more utterly opposed to each other in every particular than this step-mother and daughter. It is not possible that they can ever amalgamate. Water and oil won't mix; the passionate nightingale moaning in the shade cannot exchange confidences with the tom-cat lying curled up on the sunny window-ledge. Poor old kitty! it isn't it's fault that it likes sleeping in the warm sun and having its head scratched, and drinking sweet milk, better than the dim distant wood, with its mystic murmur and rustle, and strange sweet flowers where the thorns lie hid. It isn't its fault that when the nightingale is singing to the great yellow moon upon the black branches, cold and wet with the night dew, that it lies before the kitchen fire, dreaming of catching a mouse for to-morrow's dinner. It isn't its fault—and who shall name it a misfortune? Not the nightingale, methinks, as she falls

from the bough like a dead leaf, slain by the passion of her love and longing. No! no! they are both good in their way—the cat to make our hearth look comfortable, the nightingale to teach our love a language. But the pity of it is, that these two diverse natures will try and understand and love each other; which endeavour, laudable as it may be under certain circumstances, is always both utterly useless and painfully wearing. The cat's purring advances but cause the bird to fly, scared, to the topmost bough; the nightingale itself may break its little heart and crack its little throat without causing the cat to think of the "little brown bird" otherwise than as good for food.

Lady Brooklyn and Maizie are having a discussion in the former lady's dressing-room, whither Maizie directed her steps when she left the garden.

"But I tell you, my dear, my black velvet dress will make you look too old; besides, you

will be sure to crumple it when you fall down," says the elder lady, who is engaged in combing out her long, lank black hair, preparatory to arranging it in the more complicated mode of afternoon coifure.

Her maid has left the room to fetch the disputed dress.

"I'll promise not," says Maizie, eagerly. "Do lend it me, nothing will look so well! M. Valance says that a black velvet dress is imperative."

"What does M. Valance know about it, Maizie? I wish you would sometimes try and think I know as well as other people what is right to do; take my advice and put on your white muslin dress."

"Mamma! Guinevere in white muslin!" cries Maizie, in tones of utter disapproval, opening her large grey eyes in half-provoked, half-amused dismay at the suggestion.

"Well—why not?"

"She is a queen—a broken-hearted queen, seeking refuge by night in a convent!"

"Oh! a queen! I didn't understand—I haven't read the story." (Lady Brooklyn's literary researches have not been deep.)

"You can have my black silk if you like."

"What, and rustle about like a well-fed dowager? No, no; whatever I wear must be of noiseless material—when Guinevere sinks to the ground, it must be silently as a storm-bowed rose."

"Why must she be so quiet?" asks Lady Brooklyn, turning her dull black eyes on the girl. "Is it because she's hiding?"

Maizie interrupts her with an impatient half-laugh.

"You see, mamma, you don't know anything about it; it is no use trying to explain," she ends petulantly.

Lady Brooklyn's thin wide mouth closes with ominous solemnity, and her beady eyes grow duller. Fortunately at this juncture

the maid returns carrying the black velvet dress on her arm.

"The very thing!" cries Maizie, snatching it from her, and displaying its ample folds; "only the skirt, I don't want the body; I have a velveteen bodice of my own, an evening one, open at the front. Mamma" (turning with eager entreaty to the plump figure seated before the toilet-table), "do lend me this skirt, I'll promise to take the greatest care of it—do please."

Lady Brooklyn is a good-natured woman enough, but as is sometimes the case with good-natured women, she is incapable of the impulsive generosity that can grant a favour graciously—the free-hearted nobility that can sacrifice a prejudice, and forego an opinion with a smile.

"Very well, I suppose I must let you have it, as you have set your heart upon it, but mind I don't at all think it is the right kind of dress for you to wear, and I don't feel at

all certain that Sir Richard will approve of your acting."

"I told him we were going to have some scenes, he didn't make the least objection," says Maizie hastily, and then without waiting for any more cold water to be thrown on her undertaking in the shape of mild doubts and pensive conjectures, she makes off with her prize as fast as her legs can carry her.

"Richard is extremely elated with this new-found daughter of his," soliloquises Lady Brooklyn, as her maid rolls up and hair-pins and otherwise worries her mistress's lank hair into the latest mode; "but unless I am much mistaken"(a grand impossibility—synominous to 'let cockles grow instead of barley') "he will find her every bit as troublesome and unmanageable as her mother was before her."

In the meantime Maizie, in the privacy of

her own room, arrays herself in her step-mother's trailing skirts, and dons her own bodice, which is thrown open at the throat, revealing a portion of fair, white neck in the shape of a heart—a heart a saint might envy for its dazzling purity. She then unlocks her jewel case, and slips several extra rings on her slender fingers (rings are Maizie's peculiar weakness), fastens a magnificent brooch in the bosom of her dress, clasps a golden serpent round her throat, one round each wrist, and so descends to the school-room. It is now twelve o'clock, M. Valance and Louis are hard at work in their "sanctum," a small room shut off from the dining-room by folding doors which are always kept locked except on festive occasions, such as dinner parties, or dances, when the tutor's and pupil's privacy is ruthlessly invaded, the doors of their apartment thrown open—the litter of papers and books cleared away, and themselves ignominiously dismissed to the housekeeper's

room below stairs. They are so intent now in the hearing and construing of Virgil, that they do not notice the rattle of a key in the doors that guard their peace. "Many started on the expedition," translates Louis, "but only one, jaded and—" "footsore," prompts the tutor, "arrived at—" They both look up from the dog-eared leaves before them with dazed eyes, for the doors are thrown open and a strange and lovely vision stands for a moment framed in the door-way, and then with slow and stately steps advances. "Maizie!" cries Louis, springing up—"Guinevere to the life!" ejaculates M. Valance. But the beautiful, queenly woman in black velvet takes no notice of them. Just inside the door-way she pauses, clasps her hands, and looks up with mournful, impassioned earnestness.—"Yet help me heaven!" she sighs out, "for surely I repent; for what is true repentance but not in thought, not even in inmost thought to think again the sins that made

the past so pleasant to us." Then with hands suddenly lowered and clenched, the delicate brow knit, the white bosom heaving stormily, the sweet voice low and determined—"And have I not sworn never to see him more—never to see him more!" (the voice trailing off — head bent — hands relaxed) "never, never!" Silence, and then the queen's sad lips quiver and part in a long-drawn moaning sigh of helpless, heart-sickening yearning. The tutor has risen to his feet; his whole bearing has undergone a change while the girl has been speaking—a change difficult to be defined in words—for he stands quietly where he has risen, one hand resting on the oil-cloth covered table. Yet every curve and line of his figure somehow expresses majesty and grief. "The king," he says, in a quick, ringing voice. The velvet-clad drooping queen starts and shudders like a stately ship struck by an overwhelming wave; then slowly stiffens—stiffens; reaching out rigid, despair-

ing hands as if to ward off some threatening doom. The tutor takes one step towards her. The twisted, writhing woman's figure sinks slowly—slowly towards the ground; lower—lower, till the fair hair touches it—lower—lower, till the white hands outspread themselves upon it; lower—lower, till the proud, imperious form lies prone and passive as an abandoned corpse. Steps approach her—the king stands over her. "Liest thou here so low?" But as all my readers know the sublime address of the "stainless king" to his guilty queen, written by one Alfred Tennyson, Esq., and as those whose memories of the same having grown indistinct, can easily refresh them by a peep into a certain green-bound volume entitled "Idylls of the King," I need not here transcribe the most stately, touching words in which a noble grief-struck heart ever took forgiving leave of the one who had so broken it. M. Valance speaks them well, with the quietness of an agony conquered, with the

calmness of a great despair. "Farewell!" the king's voice does not falter as it utters the funereal word; yet his slow, steady articulation of it, conveys a sadness akin to that which pervades the last low moan of the dying. He moves away. The queen half-raises herself—stretching out white arms of entreaty; "O Arthur!" Their eyes meet—M. Valance's and Maizie's—not the king's and the queen's—and Maizie bursts into tears. Louis who has been an interested spectator of the foregoing scene, springs up with a cry of "Maizie, darling!" to go to her. M. Valance catches his arm, "Leave her alone, my boy—she will recover better by herself—it is only the reaction," he says, coolly. "Come," he adds, "we will resume our work."

Turning away with pseudo carelesness, he re-seats himself at the table beside his pupil, and draws the dog-eared leaved Virgil towards him; but his hands tremble as he turns the leaves, his chest is heaving, his pulses stirred,

and ever and anon he glances at the girl sitting on the ground with her face buried in her hands, her slight frame shaking with her sobs. "Go on," he says abruptly to Louis, "or we'll never get this construing finished." "He was welcomed with acclamations," proceeds the boy, obediently, "but so exhausted was he, that—that—" "There's no mistake about—" mutters the tutor irrelevantly, "who'd have thought it." Louis looks up astonished. "Go on—go on," commands M. Valance, almost testily. "That—that—" stammers the boy, "More than two hours elapsed before he could utter a word." The tutor stops, for Guinevere has risen from the floor, and is standing by him.

"It's all your fault," she declares, in a sweet, tremulous voice, the tears beading her long lashes, the after-passion of her sobs still agitating her breath.

"My fault, Miss Maizie?"

"Yes, I never cried once when I was re-

citing my part alone, this morning. O M. Valance, Guinevere must have been stoical indeed if she could hear Arthur utter that 'farewell' as you did, without emotion."

"Still—you must not weep at that juncture. Guinevere is too frantic and startled to give way to tears just then — afterwards when—"

"Do I act it well?" she questions eagerly, interrupting him. "Did I speak the words as Guinevere would have spoken them,—I think I did—I did not feel as if I was speaking them at all. I felt as if another soul had got inside me—a lost desperate spirit—whose utterance I could only listen to and pity. Did I act it well?

M. Valance looks up into the tear-stained, earnest face, into the large, eager eyes, smiles slightly, and shakes his head.

"No!" (a shadow falling on the eager face, disappointment stealing into the sanguine eyes). "What did I leave undone?—what

did I do wrong? Will you show me?—will you tell me?"

M. Valance gets up impatiently.

"Put away the books, Louis," he says; "it's no use trying to do any more work this morning. You can go into the garden till luncheon. Miss Maizie" (addressing the girl abruptly), "when are we to have the dress-rehearsal of all the scenes?"

"To-morrow night. Lucy Wilson knows her part of the little novice in Guinevere, and she says she has got a plain muslin dress and cap that will do capitally. You are to be the King. I didn't know you knew your part already, M. Valance."

"I know most of the Idylls by heart. But about the other scenes? Miss Wilson is to be Elaine, is she not?"

"Yes, and you King Arthur again, and Captain Brace has promised to be Lancelot."

"And about the costumes?"

"Captain Brace has got a whole lot of old

Charade dresses—he is to supply the King's and Lancelot's. Louis and one of the Arundel boys are to be my pages—Guinevere's, you know. I shall be dressed as I am now, with the addition of a gorgeous cloak."

"By rights there ought to be a crowd of knights, and ladies in waiting."

"Yes, I know; but it can't be helped, for even if we could muster them there would not be sufficient space for them to stand."

"Well!" (smiling his rare smile) "as Shakespeare says, we must leave something to the imagination. What other scenes have we? I forget."

"Enid and Geraint—I'm to be Enid, Captain Brace, Geraint."

"Any talking to be done?"

"No; I just sing the song, 'Turn, Fortune!' and then Geraint comes in and looks at me, and I get up."

"H'mm! it won't be much of a scene.—What others?"

"Elaine and Lancelot, when he asks her to name her wish—Lucy and Captain Brace have that to themselves; and Guinevere and Lancelot parting—Captain Brace and myself."

"Those are all?"

"Those are all."

The tutor is silent a moment, musing.

"Do you know all your part in Guinevere?" he asks at length.

"Yes!" (with animation). "Will you see me act it?" Then, rather sorrowfully, the added inquiry, "Did I do it so badly?"

"I never said so," M. Valance answers, hastily. "There are one or two little things to be corrected—mere trifles. If you will go through the scene with me now, from beginning to end, I will set you right."

Maizie assents to the proposal very willingly, and goes through all the Queen's speeches to the little maid; listens and weeps to the imaginary singing of "Too late!"

utters the brief soliloquy when left alone, and falls down with wonderful "finish" at the announcement of the King's arrival. M. Valance stands by prompting, and now and then directing her acting and delivery. He does not interfere much: the girl's extraordinary histrionic talent fairly amazes him.

"We will omit the King's address," he says, when this juncture in the poem is reached. "I want to hear how you declaim Guinevere's soliloquy after he has gone."

Maizie obeys. Guinevere staggers to her feet, with panting bosom and dishevelled hair, and looks round with wild, incredulous eyes—"Gone, my lord!"

M. Valance lets the girl proceed with the disjointed, passionate utterances for a little space; then he interrupts her:

"Miss Maizie!"

His voice, cold and calm, breaks strangely in with the failing, passion-shaken tones.

She pauses instantly, and frowns a little—a check of this kind is not pleasant.

"I think we had better give up this scene."

"M. Valance, why?" And an unfeigned flash of indignation lights up the astonished grey eyes.

M. Valance has no reason ready, apparently. He turns away; he walks to the window, and leans out into the still, fragrant air.

"M. Valance!"

Guinevere is standing near him; he can feel her light hand upon his arm, but he does not turn nor look up.

"Is it—is it—because I cannot act it rightly? Oh! why don't you tell me so at once, instead of taking such a round-about way to convey your opinion to me?"

The girl's voice is full of a pained distress. He does not take his eyes from the smooth terrace and bright flowers, but he knows

exactly how her face is looking—the guileless, beseeching eyes, the vexed flush.

"That is not the reason," he says, hesitatingly; "you act it very well—very well!—but—"

"Oh, M. Valance, don't be so provoking! I can't give it up—I can't, I tell you?" And Maizie stamps her foot emphatically, and looks a very contumacious Guinevere indeed. M. Valance turns round slowly, for beneath the girlish impetuosity of the words he hears a strange accent of earnest appeal.

"Why not?" he asks, surveying the mobile, excited face intently. "Have you so set your heart upon it?"

Maizie's red lips unclose impulsively, but no words come, and she turns away from the tutor's scrutinising gaze with a half-bewildered gesture.

"We can easily find another scene for you, where less acting is required," he suggests, after a pause.

"No other scene would be a substitute," she answers, with averted face; then turning to him again, with tears in her innocent eyes, she whispers half-fearfully:

M. Valance, I don't know how it is, nor what it is, that makes me feel so; but it is as if Guinevere's spirit got inside me. I have not to plan nor think about my acting—I am Herself! The sensation is so new—so strange—so delightful—I would rather do anything than give it up—*anything!*"

M. Valance sighs a sigh so deep, it is almost a groan.

"Is it so?" he asks. Then he considers a moment. Opposition will do no good now—rather harm. The rich, impassioned nature has found a channel into which to pour its wealth of wild emotion. Unintentionally he has been the one to lift the sluice-gate that confined it, and now its grand, impetuous waters are rushing madly through. It has lain comparatively quiet all these years, only

murmuring and heaving a little as it questioned the weeds and water-flowers that lay beyond, only mirroring the moon and the stars in its dreamy ripple; but now, now! —better let it exhaust its force a little before raising a barrier against its floods, or a devastation would likely supervene.

"Well, I suppose I must let you go on with it as you desire, but—"

The luncheon-bell rings.

"Thank you so much!" cries Maizie, as with a bright smile and nod, she darts away precipitately to change her dress.

Sir Richard cannot bear unpunctuality. Woe to the delinquent who appears after a meal has commenced!

—"But I would rather have cut off my right-hand than have been the first to rouse this sleeping power—this most fierce and insatiable of all the passions, save one, that sways man's soul—*la fièvre dramatique!*"

CHAPTER VIII.

" Being so very wilful, you must die ! "

—*Elaine.*

A BORN ACTRESS.

THERE is company at Castle Grange to-night. It is the anniversary of the birthday of Sir Brooklyn's only daughter. She was seventeen years old this morning, and it is only the second birthday she has spent under the roof of her father's house. It has been a bright day—a sunny, joyous July day, and all through its long, glad hours, Maizie and Louis have been playing, and dallying, and laughing, in the sweet causeless gaiety of early youth. The tutor has held himself apart, perhaps fearing to cast a shadow on his young pupil's free-hearted enjoyment.

Up in his own bed-room he has been seated during the whole afternoon, writing busily. Twice—only twice, he rose and walked to the window looking out on the garden from whence the sound of soft girlish laughter and boyish mirth proceeded—twice, but twice—and the second time he only just glanced and turned away. Yet the picture that met his gaze in that little moment is haunting him still. A girl seated on the sunny sward among the bright flowers—bare-headed—the sunlight turning her hair to gold, her face smiling and mirthful, upturned to a fair, slight boy, kneeling beside her, in the act of placing a frail, fairy-like wreath of rosebuds on her head. M. Valance did not go to the window again, yet the dark eyes strayed very often from the paper before them to the open window where the bees hummed in and out, and the sweet breath of the flowers came, in faint voluptuous sighs of content.

"If I have not learned self-control, I have

learned nothing," he said, as the truant eyes came back from one of their wanderings, and fixed themselves resolutely on the foolscap.

But no matter how strong-willed and self-controlled a man may be, he cannot prevent nor expel the flashing, evanescent pictures of his mental vision.

M. Valance sees the pretty, haunting Idyll at this moment as he stands waiting for the curtains to be drawn from before the first scene. He is the stage-manager of the evening, and after placing and arranging the groups behind the curtain, he has come round to the front to enjoy the effect with the rest of the spectators. The curtain is hung between the school-room and dining-room—the folding-doors being flung back. The long, lofty dining-room is very dimly lighted. The table is removed, a row of closely-packed chairs have taken its place. In the first row sit Sir Richard and Lady Brooklyn, Mrs. Brace, Sir William Lacy and his wife, three

young ladies, and old Major Sedley. The room is crowded, and though the windows are all slightly opened, fans and vinegarets are in great request and agitated motion.

"What is the first scene to be, M. Valance?" asks old Mrs. Brace of the tutor, who happens to be standing by her chair.

"I must not inform you," he answers with a smile and a bow; "the spectators are to guess the subject."

"Oh! ah, true! Well, is my son in this act?" questions Mrs. Brace.

She is a frail old lady, with a wrinkled, gentle face, and weak, tremulous voice.

"He is."

And as M. Valance speaks, the curtains, whereon he sees the fair girl and boy sitting on the grass, are withdrawn, revealing a different picture, but one not less fair and sweet. A lovely slight girl, dressed in some soft faded robe of dim, dull brown, with neck and arms bare, seated at an old-fashioned spinning-

wheel, singing softly to herself, in clear, bird-like tones,

"Turn, Fortune! turn thy wheel!"

There are cries of "Enid!" "How lovely!" "Beautiful!" "*So* sweet!" from all parts of the room. Enid sings two verses through, and then M. Valance disappears, and the curtains closes again for a moment or two. When they re-open the scene has changed. Enid stands as if just risen from her spinning-wheel. Fronting her is a knight clad in armour with his helmet doffed, regarding the maid with unmistakable love and admiration. The position of both figures is extremely natural and picturesque. The arrested step of the knight — his half-surprised, half-reverent glance, the beautiful, meanly-clad form of the young girl. The girl herself, with a sudden shyness weighing down her white lids, a timid, shrinking grace in her half-averted head, and pretty, meekly folded hands.

"Brava!" "Good!" "Well done, Geraint!" —"I shouldn't mind being Geraint myself with such an Enid to follow me through the world," avows old Major Sedley, in the somewhat elevated voice that all old gentlemen occasionally affect when giving vent to their criticism.

Enid's lowered eyelids quiver, her cheek flushes, a tell-tale dimple comes at the corner of her mouth.

M. Valance sees the warning indications of failing self-control, and gives the signal for the curtains to be drawn. Not a moment too soon, apparently, for no sooner are the couple shielded from the gaze of the company than a girlish ringing laugh of irrepressible amusement is heard from behind the curtain. Sir Richard's grave face softens into a smile as he hears his daughter's clear voice.

"What a child she is still!" he says, with a caressing inflexion in his hard voice. "What a gay, light-hearted child!"

"She is seventeen, is she not?" asks Lady Lacy, a somewhat stern-looking and middle-aged lady, to whom he addressed his remark.

"Yes—to-day."

"She looks younger," proceeds her ladyship. "Perhaps it's that faded old dress she has on."

"Maizie always will wear what nobody else would think of wearing," puts in Lady Brooklyn, calmly and vaguely.

"Her dress was quite in keeping," dissents her husband, somewhat shortly.

"Miss Brooklyn would look well in anything—she is an extremely lovely girl," remarks an elderly spinster on the Baronet's right-hand, with stately courtesy.

The curtains part for the third scene. A maiden and a knight again, but the figures and the accompanying scenery are different. They are standing in a garden. No pains have been spared to make it look like a

garden, and the effect is admirable : the grass sods laid down for the sward, the gay flower-pots, the dark shrubs, the broad yellow light thrown from some ingeniously placed lamp, all combine to make a highly pleasing and realistic picture.

The first words the Knight speak reveals what incident in the Laureate's poem the scene is intended to illustrate.

> "Delay no longer; speak your wish,
> Seeing I must go to-day."

A subdued murmur of "Lancelot!—Lancelot and Elaine!" goes round the room.

Miss Wilson, a fragile, dark-haired girl, only sixteen, with an extremely white and delicate complexion, *looks* Elaine to the life ; but, alas! the resemblance is destroyed when she speaks. Her manner is nervous and hesitating, and her cheeks flush instead of paling when she utters the words,

> "Going?—and we shall never see you more!"

Lancelot (Captain Brace, a stalwart young Irishman, with black hair, light grey eyes, and swarthy complexion), looks the character passably, and acts it beautifully. His straight, military bearing, the somewhat sad cast of his countenance, all contribute in rendering him a suitable representative of "Arthur's greatest knight." His protecting, brotherly attitude to the young girl at his side, his start of pained surprise at her faltering confession,

"I have gone mad.—I love you: let me die!"

are altogether admirable, and betray no mean histrionic talent. But Miss Wilson grows more shy and confused every moment, partly by reason of the many eyes upon her, and partly by reason of a very real *tendresse* for the would-be Lancelot by her side. Instead of raising her lily face, and eyes too full of the anguish of parting to know aught of shyness, she droops her head and swallows her words, and, worse mistake

of all, half turns away from the Knight she offers to "follow through the world."

M. Valance, standing half-concealed by the curtain, utters a suppressed groan, and then smiles indulgently as one of those revelations come to him that so often visit swift, sensitive natures, and that duller folk are apt to term "inspirations."

"Pauvre fille c'est la veritable chose avec elle," he mutters.

The gentle earnestness that Captain Brace throws into Lancelot's kindly remonstrance with the enamoured maid half compensates for the deficiency of Miss Wilson's acting; and then at the last, as Elaine falters out the words,

"Of all this I will nothing!"

he redeems the scene entirely by the skilful placing of his arm, thrown round her, to support the fainting girl. The fair white face falls in helpless, touching abandonment on the kindly heart that cannot love her, and the long dark

hair droops over it, the slight, childish form lying relaxed and strengthless on his arm.

"Good—very good!" commends M. Valance.

Mrs. Brace wipes her eyes. Lancelot bends his stately head over the unconscious girl; his face is full of a grave, pained pity; he gently folds back the heavy brown hair from the still white face, gazing down on it with grieved compassion.

The curtains close. The scene is re-demanded. Alas! when the curtains part to reveal it for a second time, though the figures have retained precisely the same attitude, the effect is utterly lost, for lo! the fair young face resting on the warrior's heart is glowing *rose red!* M. Valance gives the signal for the curtains to be re-drawn instantly, while the spectators smile, cheer, applaud, and whisper comments and conjectures to each other.

"Very trying position!"—"Poor little girl!"—"Rather a case, I imagine!"—"How foolish they looked!" &c.

M. Valance hastens behind the curtain to arrange the next group. There is a little delay before the curtains are withdrawn again, for the garden scene has to be cleared away. The company begin to get restless and uncomplimentary. Suddenly the sweet low tone of a harmonium breaks the irksome silence. It begins tremulously—now dying away in unutterable sadness, now moaning out again in a gentle, half-stifled wail. No one recognises the air—no one declares "every note is familiar to them, only they have forgotten the name." It is strange to them—quite strange; and the broken chords and mournful interrupted cadences hold them still and attentive till the curtains slowly rise for the fourth time.

"Elaine!" they say, and then they say no more, but gaze, for it is the best tableau that

has been presented yet. Elaine at rest—Elaine lying on a richly-draped pall, with roses round her and a lily on her breast. The blue subdued light falling on her face renders it ghastly white, yet the soft curves of the mouth and peaceful unsunken eyelids prevent the still young features from expressing any of the horror of death. There is a faint smile on the closed, grave lips, and a rest on the brow, as of a child asleep. The King, clad in a golden cloak, stands nearest the dead maiden. The light is so managed that a bright stream of rays falls on his crown and head. He stretches out his hand, and takes the letter from Elaine's stiff fingers, and reads the touching missive. Standing half in the shadow is Queen Guinevere, with attendant pages, her face half-pitiful, half-ashamed, as she turns it first to the dead maiden, and then to the silent figure of Lancelot, standing quite in the shadow, with his proud head bent, and one mailed hand

covering his face; a knight or two, and some frightened, inquisitive-looking ladies-in-waiting, complete the tableau.

M. Valance personates the King, and his low rich voice is heard with strange distinctness throughout the room as he reads the dead girl's letter.

Again and again the curtains are obliged to be withdrawn after they close. The company is unanimous in its opinion concerning the scene.

"Perfect!"—"Lovely!"—"Did you ever see anything so sweetly sad!"—"How real it makes the Idyll! I shall never read the poem again without seeing this scene."

"What a charming Elaine your daughter would have made!" says the elderly spinster, by name Miss Olivia Johnson, to Sir Richard. "Miss Wilson looked very nice, but somehow one always associates that long golden hair with the lily-maid."

"Maizie would not have looked the cha-

racter at all," remarks Lady Brooklyn, overhearing; "her face is too bright and unsentimental."

Sir Richard does not take any notice of his wife's observation; he turns to the little old maid at his side.

"I fancy Tennyson himself gives Elaine golden hair, and certainly our artists all paint her with fair tresses; yet I think dark-brown hair would be the real colour to consort with the white, plaintive beauty ascribed to the love-lorn maid. I should imagine Maizie's face of too spirited a type to give the idea of a life so quietly laid down."

As if to corroborate the Baronet's opinion, the curtains are suddenly withdrawn, discovering the beautiful, passionate face of his daughter turned towards the audience, every feature quivering and alive with bitter, overwhelming emotion, while at her feet, with one of her hands clasped in both his, and his forehead bowed upon it, kneels Lancelot.

"The Queen—Guinevere and Lancelot parting," says Miss Johnson. She is about to add some remark, but looking up to Sir Richard's face, she sees such a dark shadow there, she refrains. The two figures do not change their posture; they speak no word. Then, as if to give a voice to the oppressive agony of the parting, the harmonium from behind a screen begins that wailing, passionate melody—that inarticulate cry of rending heart-strings—"Ah! che la morte!" One verse of the well-known melody is scarcely concluded before the curtains close. It is encored, but the encore is not responded to. The fact is, the performers hardly hear, being engaged in an animated discussion about the next scene. M. Valance wants to cut it out. "It is full late," he says; "the company must be tired of sitting in the dark. There will be no time for dancing. Miss Maizie will let the best part of her birthday enter-

tainment slip, if she persists in acting Guinevere."

"Nonsense! it's by far the best," declares Captain Brace; "besides, I have never seen Miss Brooklyn act it, and I am sure she will do so to the life."

"Miss Maizie is tired," returns the tutor.

"I am not tired," the girl asserts, eagerly, "and I want to act. I want to, and I must, and I will."

Her resolution is received with much applause by the rest of the evening's performers, who are all eager to see "Miss Brooklyn act."

M. Valance makes one more effort to prevent the unpleasantness he sees imminent—one more despairing effort to shut in the wild waters his hand has unwittingly let loose.

"Miss Maizie," he says, laying his hand on the Queen's arm as she throws off her cloak, and comes forward to take her place in the scene, "I have never asked you to do me

a favour—I ask you now for the first time to forego a little temporary gratification at my request — to resign your *rôle* of Guinevere."

The mobile, speaking face undergoes two or three rapid changes before Maizie answers. Doubt, disappointment, irritation, resolution. The great grey eyes turn to him full of this last. Before she speaks he knows it is all over; the waters will not be restrained; the fresh, impetuous flood will know no check; the attempt to replace the sluice-gate is futile.

"M. Valance, I cannot give it up. I know you think I cannot act it well. You don't like to say so, but you keep hinting it. I will show you other people's opinion of the same —I will prove to you that my acting is not so inferior as you suppose."

"I do not think it inferior—how many times must I tell you so?" answers the tutor quickly; "but I fancy—I am almost sure—

your father will not like your acting the part."

"My father! he will have no objection. M. Valance, for pity's sake don't try and throw any more obstacles in the way. I am *determined* to act the part."

At this moment Miss Wilson, dressed as the little Novice, comes forward to take her place. M. Valance is silent. It is clearly useless to attempt any more remonstrance. He arranges the Queen and maid, and then moves to the front to see the effect on the withdrawal of the curtains. They are drawn directly. The harmonium begins to moan again, a prelude to the coming tragedy—a prelude with a hint in its broken chords and fitful melody of the refrain to the Novice's song, "Too late!—too late!" As he stands there even as the curtains part M. Valance sees again the vision of the smiling girl and boy, with sunlight in their hair—only for a moment, then it vanishes, to give place to a

far different picture. A dimly-lit room, the figure of the Queen sitting by a small deal table; a hooded cloak almost conceals her dress, and shrouds her bright hair. She sits half-fronting the audience, her head resting listlessly on her hand. A little Novice in white walks to and fro behind her, reading a book and humming softly to herself. Guinevere lifts her head wearily, and turns with a stately sadness to the little nun.

> "O maiden, if indeed ye list to sing,
> Sing, and unbind my heart, that I may weep."

There is a sort of start among the company —a thrill as if an electric current passed swiftly down the room, and smote impalpably the occupants of the closely-packed chairs with sudden, sharp force. Maizie has struck her first note on that subtle instrument, the human heart. Strange gift! fascinating power! that can play upon life itself, that can comprehend and command the vast range of the soul's emotions, and wake their hidden

harmonies at will! Where does the magic lie? A pure vibrating voice, a few quietly-spoken words, and every eye is fixed, every ear attent.

The little maiden readily complies with the Queen's request, and sings "the song the nuns taught her" to Miss Linsay's plaintive setting of the same. Perhaps nothing shows such real histrionic power as skilful and expressive by-play. Maizie's is irreproachable. M. Valance, who has not taught her, nor given her a hint, nor even before seen her acting during the singing of the bridegroom's song, is fairly amazed at the spontaneous ease and effortless perfection of her gestures and attitudes. She sits still during the first verse; then, as the pleading pathos of the words and air begin to stir her stunned and aching heart, she rises, and totters with aimless steps along the stage in restless misery. "Too late!—too late!" She pauses instantly in her pacings at the recurrence of

the refrain—pauses, looking with fixed, still features at the audience, as if the chill of her great despair has again frozen her body and soul. Perfectly still she stands, with blank, tearful eyes, till the doomful words are over, then as the sweet soft pleading of the lost virgin recommences, she moves restlessly and unsteadily to her chair.

For a moment her face is hidden, then raised, changed and quivering with a gesture of wild entreaty.

"Oh, let us in!—Oh, let us in!"

The arms are slowly outstretched, the hood falls off the bright head.

"Oh, let us in, that we may kiss his feet!"

As the last supplication dies away in faint moans, the outstretched arms and uplifted face sink gradually till they rest upon the table. The jewelled hands hang nerveless; the shrouded form stirs not, as the little

Novice, in soft tones, utters the solemn declaration,

"Ye cannot enter now."

Her song over, the maiden perceives for the first time the bowed form of her listener.

"I pray you, noble lady, weep no more,"

she entreats, laying a pitying hand upon her shoulders.

The Queen raises herself slowly. She has not been weeping. Her eyes are dry and dazed. She passes her hand across her brow, as if to push away the terrible weight of sin and sorrow pressing there.

"By Jove! I never saw such acting off the stage—never!" whispers Captain Brace to M. Valance, by whom he happens to be standing.

"No, nor on it often, I think," returns the tutor.

"She's a born actress! What a pity—"

"That she ever took into her head to have these scenes?"

"No, no! but that she cannot be trained for the profession. She would—"

"Hush! hush!—don't mention such a thing! I only hope this night's work won't bring unrest and dissension. She is so young and ardent, I wish Tennyson and all his works were in the fire before I had been an accomplice in the matter."

M. Valance's low, emphatic tones are shaken and hoarse. Captain Brace looks at him in surprise; and even in the dim darkness of the lowered gas-jets the tutor's white face and anxious eyes startle him.

"My dear sir," he begins, "you don't apprehend—"

"Everything!" answers the other shortly. "I must go and robe myself as the King, now;—it ought to be in cap and bells."

He hurries away noiselessly, leaving Captain Brace wondering "what the deuce the fellow meant.

Miss Olivia's dim blue eyes have stolen

once or twice to the Baronet's face since the commencement of the scene, but not once has she dared address him, so forbidding is his aspect, so stern his demeanour. Lady Lacy on her other side has been obliged to put on her gold-rimmed spectacles before recognising the proud, grief-wrung face of the Queen as Maizie Brooklyn's.

"I never saw such a change; the girl must have two aspects, I declare," she exclaimed in hushed amaze to Lady Brooklyn.

"It's the dress," said that lady calmly; "I told her it would make her look fifty."

"But look at her face; how wonderfully expressive. She certainly can act," has been the other lady's remark, as she watched Maizie's by-play during the "little maid's song."

After that, much low-toned converse followed, accompanied with more than the usual amount of fan-shakings and head-noddings. But even they have stopped their

whispers now, and are looking and listening attentively to Queen Guinevere, as she starts and cowers at the announcement of the King's approach — her cloak loosened and dropping from her, as if to hint that no shelter nor concealment can avail to screen the guilty Queen from her lord's condemning eye. Down to the earth she sinks—the stately, imperious Queen—the defiant impetuous woman—the desperate, discrowned wife. Down on the earth she lies, grovelling in shamed abasement at the feet of her rightful lord. There is a moment's pause as Arthur stands above her, his helmet in his hand, his head slightly bent, his whole bearing that of a fearless and stainless knight grieved to the depths of his generous heart at the pitiful spectacle before him. His low, clear voice breaks the silence at length. There is all the dignity of a sinless sorrow in its unfaltering tones. He pauses now and then in the address, of which he gives but

portions, the tremulous thunder of the harmonium filling up the pauses with broken moanings of the song's refrain, "Too late! too late!" Once — only once — does the King's calm voice falter; once—only once—does the mortal agony of his deathless love conquer his sublime self-control.

> "But how to take last leave of all I loved?
> O golden hair with which I used to play—
> Not knowing!"

His kingly figure sways and droops over the prone head and dust-kissed hair, from under the shadow of which white hands creep forth, and clasp and cling about his feet. He pauses for a moment, and the harmonium forgets the despairing refrain, and sobs and shudders forth a wild adieu—only a bar or two; almost immediately it breaks and pauses, dying away with a half-uttered moan. The King straightens himself; his voice is heard again, calm and unshaken. Nor does it fail again during the

remainder of his address. His last word, "Farewell," is spoken steadily, slowly, calmly; his hands are spread forth solemnly in blessing-wise above the earth-pressed brow, and then he turns and leaves her to her "shame."

The company in Castle Grange dining-room has been strangely stirred and astonished by Maizie's acting and declamation, yet not one of them is at all prepared for the wild burst of despair and passion, as the wayward stricken Queen staggers to her feet, and finds herself alone for evermore! "Yes, they—he—shall see how she can act," thinks Maizie to herself, as she pours all the strength of her nature—all the vehemence of her emotion into the Queen's bewildered paroxysm of love. The sudden pause in her hurried utterances, as she half-turns from the audience, and echoes in quiet, dreamy wonder, imitating the very inflexion of his voice, the King's last word, "farewell,"

sends a cold thrill to the hearts of her listeners. Faces pale, hands twitch, handkerchiefs flutter.

"I should have answered his farewell!
His mercy choked me"

All the proud curves leave the queenly figure, her voice breaks and dies away in sobs, her face is hidden, as the King's great love finds its way to her rebellious heart at last, and melts it utterly. She lifts her face at length —it is tear-stained and softened, and her voice is tremulous and husky with the love that has come too late.

"My own true lord!"

Alas! for the dread recoil:

"How dare I call him mine?"

The horror and self-loathing on the beautiful young face are terrible to see. The shrinking, writhing figure—the frantic, convulsive motion of the stiffening hands to push away the fearful "shadow" of her woman's shame—the

mad light in the wide eyes, as the wild impulse seizes the repentant soul to free itself from the sinful body.

"Shall I kill myself?"

—the intolerable despair of the up-flung hands and scorn-distorted face, as Maizie whispers out between her parched and quivering lips,

"I *cannot* kill my sin,
If soul be soul, nor can I kill my shame"—

causes an almost painful emotion among the company. Sir Richard rises without a word, and leaves the room. No one else stirs. That acting is but pseudo-powerful that can thrill, but not hold its audience. There is the perfect hush of strained attention and rivetted interest, till the short scene is over, and the curtains drawn, and Maizie, screened at last from the gazing eyes, has sunk down, white and trembling, on a chair, burying her face in her hands.

"Miss Maizie, your father is asking for

you; he wants you to go to him in the library," says M. Valance, gravely.

"Papa!" she says, jumping out, while the old, radiant smile breaks over her face, white still from recent excitement and fatigue. "Yes, I'll go to him. M. Valance" (shaking her head half-archly, half-triumphantly at him); "never again say I cannot act. I believe you were the only one who didn't cry, and you look quite pale."

CHAPTER IX.

"Comfort's in heaven, and we are on the earth,
Where nothing lives but crosses, cares and grief."
—*Richard II., Act II., Scene* 2.

A LONELY MORNING.

It is half-past ten a.m. Sir Richard has breakfasted, and Lady Brooklyn has breakfasted, yet the cloth has not been removed, nor the silver coffee pot dismissed.

"Maizie's dreadfully late this morning," announces her ladyship, languidly, as Sir Richard rustles his *Times*, and glances impatiently towards the door.

"She must be tired," he suggests; "you had better ring, and have her breakfast taken up."

"Very absurd that a young girl should be unable to rise at the proper time because she

happens to sit up an hour or two later dancing," remarks Lady Brooklyn, as she complies with her husband's suggestion.

"Maizie was a good deal fatigued after the tableaux," says the baronet, frowning through his spectacles at the leading article.

"Was she? She didn't look so. I don't think I ever saw her with such a colour; and she danced so persistently, I was obliged to interfere."

"Poor child! I'm afraid she hadn't a very pleasant evening altogether."

And so saying, Sir Richard gets up restlessly, throws down his paper, and strolls out through the low window, into the garden. The servant enters at the same moment.

"Bring up a small tray, and some fresh coffee," is her ladyship's order. While waiting for it to be executed, she cuts two neat slices of bread, and with her own fat hands lays them on Maizie's plate, with a pat of butter. Poor old lady! she means to be kind.

When the servant returns, she tells her not to wait, as she will take up Miss Brooklyn's breakfast herself. She pours a good portion of the clotted cream into Maizie's coffee-cup, piles all sorts of jams on her plate; and placing them both on the tray, she waddles off with it; stopping on every second stair to try and hold up her stiff silk dress, which persists in getting under her large flat feet. By the time that she arrives at her step-daughter's door, she is somewhat out of breath, and cross. She knocks. No answer. She knocks again, and upsets some of the coffee; also drops a piece of bread. No answer. She puts down the tray, and trys the door: it is locked. "Maizie!" she calls, raising her sharp-toned voice, "open the door directly!" There is a movement inside; a footstep crosses the room; the key is turned in the lock; the door flung open, and Maizie stands regarding her step-mother with anything but a peaceful or approving eye.

"Why, you are dressed!" begins her ladyship, "why didn't you come down to—"

"Because I didn't want any breakfast," interrupts the girl, in a tired, sullen voice. "I want to be quiet; I have got a headache."

"But it is much better for you to have some tea. I have brought it up on a tray."

Lady Brooklyn picks up the tray, and makes as though she would enter the room.

"I do not want any, thank you," reiterates Maizie, standing so as to bar her mother's further progress.

"Maizie, I insist on your trying to eat some; it is Sir Richard's wish," says Lady Brooklyn, pushing past her into the chamber.

The windows are both wide open; the bed is as the housemaid left it the preceding day.

"Maizie, have you not been to bed?" demands her ladyship, turning her astonished bead-black eyes on the girl

"No—no! not exactly," (stammering and flushing); "I don't think I was sleepy."

Lady Brooklyn sets down the tray and shuts the door.

"What have you been doing all night? —are you ill?" she asks, laying her hand on Maizie's arm, in what she intends to be a firm, kind manner; but which, to the girl, is simply irritating. She shrinks away uneasily, and gives a curious little attempt at a laugh.

"I really don't know, Mamma; I believe I have been thinking," she says, turning away her head.

"Are you sure you are not ill?" questions the other again, with an admirable assumption of maternal anxiety, as she places one podgy (excuse the term, I cannot find another so expressive) hand under the girl's chin, and turns her face to the light. The great grey eyes are swollen to half their normal size, and rimmed with the black line of their first night of weeping, instead of sleeping. They cannot front the light.

"My dear child, you have been crying your eyes out!"

"I have a headache: a horrible headache," cries Maizie, wrenching her face away, and sitting on the low window-sill.

"No wonder! sitting up all night; but what have you been crying about?"

"The pain" (moaning, and rocking herself to and fro, with hidden face)—"the pain has been so keen."

"Poor dear!" (sitting down beside her); "perhaps it was the acting——"

"I want to be left alone; I want to be left quiet."

"Have you any Eau de Cologne? it's a very good thing; so is camphor. I will put some on your forehead."

Lady Brooklyn goes to the toilet table, and rummages about among Maizie's bottles, returning with a deluged handkerchief and a vinaigrette. In the meantime, Maizie has risen, and is leaning out of the window.

"Now dear, if you will lie down in your bed, I will pass this handkerchief over your brow, and sprinkle your face."

"Thank you, Mamma, but I don't think that would do me good. I—I—feel so restless. I think I will go out."

"Go out without having eaten a morsel? My dear Maizie, you must be mad!"

The girl takes down her hat from a peg, and twines a red shawl about her.

"It will do me good," she asserts.

"You certainly are a most extraordinary girl; I can't understand you in the least."

"No?"

"Try and eat a little," continues my lady, coaxingly; for Maizie's white face and dry lips make her feel vaguely uncomfortable, despite her cow-like insensibility to grief.

"I cannot, I tell you.—Oh! let me go;" and Maizie, pushing her step-mother's hand away almost rudely, marches out of the room, and down stairs. Lady Brooklyn does not

follow, nor attempt any remonstrance. She puts the vinaigrette back on the toilette-table, looks in the glass, and replaces a rebellious hair-pin in her coarse black hair.

"Richard will have trouble with that girl," she says placidly; and then returns to the neglected tray, and sips some of the coffee; taking out the creamy clots with the spoon, and swallowing them with apparent relish. She is not heartless, this woman. I will not have you think that, reader. It is only that so few pains and sorrows are within her comprehension, and as she has no imagination, it remains that she can only sympathize with those of earth's unhappy ones suffering from vertigo, scarlet fever, loss of fortune or position. There *are* sorrows and losses worse than these, as some of us know; yet when we meet the hard, indifferent gaze of human eyes, let us try and believe it is not want of heart, but comprehension, that renders them dry and vacant.

"This is truth the poet sings."

"More evil is wrought by want of thought than want of heart." And beneath this surface truth there lies the acknowledgment of a deeper fact—that the real want in nature is intellect, rather than "*bonté.*" It is not so much their evil propensity; it is their wretchedly imperfect development that leads to such weariful misapprehensions among men.

"O my cousin—shallow-hearted!"

Not hard-hearted, not stony, nor impenetrable; only too small, too limited, to hold the rich abundance of a poet's love; yet the poet himself, in the supreme pain of his bereavement, cannot wish her the worse doom

———"To decline
On a range of lower feelings and a narrower heart than mine! * * *
Better thou and I were lying hidden from the heart's disgrace,
Roll'd in one another's arms, and silent in a last embrace."

Aye, better a thousand times! for what is the death of the body to the gradual decay of the soul?—what the dropping of the autumn leaf is to the blighting of the bud it hides.

There is no sun to-day, and Maizie shivers a little from loss of sleep and want of food as she steps out of the drawing-room window into the cool, damp morning air. She does not wend her way towards the garden, from whence the faint perfume of a cigar reaches her. She turns down a gravelled path to the little oak wood on the right wing of the house. She walks rapidly along till she comes to the wicket-gate leading into the wood; then she pauses, and leaning her arms on it, gives a low, inarticulate cry of despair. Whatever her grief is, it regains complete possession of her soul, for she forgets all about her intention of entering the wood, and stands motionless with bowed head and arms on the little gate, for the space of an hour.

"Maizie!" calls a voice she knows—a gay, boyish voice.

She lifts her head slowly, like one awaking from a long sleep. The sun has come out

since last she looked upon the world, and is shooting down bright rays of golden light through the yellow-green leaves of the oak trees in front of her, and on her bright hair a warm steady beam is resting like the kind, caressing hand of one who would comfort, but can find no words.

Louis bounds up to her, and pants out—

"Mamma said you had gone out, and so I came to look for you. M. Valance wants to hear your French; it is half-an-hour after time already."

"Tell him I cannot do any lessons to-day, I have too bad a headache."

"Poor Maizie!" (putting his arms round her affectionately, and holding up his lips to kiss her); "you do look so pale."

The girl stoops, and kisses him more than once, and takes off his hat and smooths the hair from his forehead with cold trembling little hands; but she says nothing.

"Maizie, darling, don't stay under these

trees; you will get so cold. Come in and lie down," entreats Louis.

She disengages herself from his arms gently, but quickly, as though their soft touch hurts her.

"The sun is shining; I will take a walk round the wood to warm me before I come in. Dear Louis, you must not stay any longer; M. Valance is waiting for you."

"He'll be so sorry you can't come; he's always sorry when you miss, and this morning he has been wondering and wondering why you didn't come; at last he sent me to see."

"And I am sorry too; but go now, Louis."

"Yes, I'm going," and after pressing his sister's hand to his lips with boyish fervour, he walks away reluctantly and sadly down the shaded path. Maizie watches the little figure till it disappears behind the trees, and then turns and opens the gate. She begins to feel terribly weary. She passes along

under the shifting trellis-work of sunbeams and shadows in half-conscious-wise. The brambles stretch out long thorny arms, and clutch at her dress, as if to find out whether she is a living, sentient person, or only a large red flower the wind has brought from the garden. The birds also seem uncertain of her nature, for they come quite near her, peering down from branches right over head, and even alight just before her, and look up enviously into her face. One robin with dull red breast and bright eye seems determined to clear up the mystery, for he hops perseveringly after her till she arrives at the little summer house at the further end of the wood. Lying on the bench inside is a half-withered wreath of rose-buds. The girl starts back as if the dead garland were a corpse.

"I cannot bear it!" she moans; "I cannot bear it;" and the enquiring robin flys away in a fright, and never rests wing till he finds

himself on the topmost branch of the highest oak, close to his friend, the hedge-sparrow, to whom he confides all he knows about the red-cloaked figure, with, I'm afraid, some additions of his own, for Maizie hears them still chattering as she lies down on the warm sunny grass in the field beyond. This meadow that she has chosen for her resting-place does not belong to Sir Richard; but just now Maizie neither knows nor cares to whom it belongs. It is warm and quiet under the hawthorn hedge that divides it from the wood, and nobody will be likely to find out her whereabouts, she thinks dreamily, her cheek resting stilly against the bank, and her warm red shawl wrapped closely round her. So she falls asleep—fast asleep—and the blue and white and yellow butterflies flutter over her and past her, and dark-winged moths, less polite than their gay lady friends, settle on her still hands, and saunter coolly over her tangled hair and back-thrown hat.

One of the cows also, from the other end of the field, thinks it worth while to stroll over and see what the red thing lying under the hedge may happen to be. She is in no hurry about it; in fact, to show of how little moment the discovery is to her, she stops twice on her journey to munch a mouthful or two of grass. She marches up to the sleeping girl at last, swinging her head, and the great trails of clear saliva hanging from her jaws, solemnly from side to side. If Maizie only knew who is watching her noonday slumber! But the pretty brown cow is not prying in her curiosity. She stands for a moment or two regarding the sleeping figure with mild meaningless eyes and lowered head, and then turns away with a nonchalant switch of her tail to munch some clover heads growing near.

CHAPTER X.

"O, God! 'twas this I knew; 'twas this I feared:
To see the trouble grow into her eyes."

RENUNCIATION.

"WHERE is Maizie?" demands Sir Richard with a frown, as he looks round the luncheon table after having helped himself to the remaining wing of a pair of cold ducks that he has been diligently cutting up and handing round to those assembled—namely, his wife, Capt. Brace, Louis, and M. Valance.

"She can't be out still!" says Lady Brooklyn inquiringly.

"But I thought she had a headache," ejaculates the baronet, helping himself to some green peas.

"She was out at twelve o'clock, and she

told me she was going to walk round the wood. May I go and look for her?" asks Louis, half rising.

"No, no, my boy," says M. Valance, arresting him; "I have finished, and if Sir Richard will kindly excuse me, I shall be most happy to go in search of Miss Brooklyn."

"Thank you, M. Valance; but I am sorry to trouble you. Are you sure you have finished?"

"Quite certain, thank you." And, rising with a bow, the tutor lays aside his napkin, and passes out through the open window. He walks leisurely along under the burning sun, through the flower garden, through the kitchen garden, into the shady walk, into the wood; then he stops, considering which path he shall take, and finally chooses the one leading to the summer-house. He does not take long to reach it—not nearly so long as Maizie took in the morning; and as he

walks he stoops and picks up a stick lying on the path, which he retains in his hand, cutting so savagely at the twigs and fluttering leaves as he passes, that never a bird ventures near him. One of the quick, hard strokes, though, catches an unwary butterfly, and lays it, bruised and quivering, at his feet. He does not notice the bright crumpled wings in his path; if he were to notice them, he would be sorry, for he is tender-hearted as a woman about taking life. Not that his remorse would do the poor insect much good now—now that its gay little life is over, perhaps only cut short by an hour or two; yet the sun was shining so brightly, and the flowers were so sweet to hover near, and the air so free and soft to beat light wings against! M. Valance peers into the summer-house, as did Maizie, and he also sees the twined rose-buds lying on the bench, but he does not start back as the girl did; on the contrary, he advances into the summer-

house, and takes the poor little wreath carefully in his hand, as though it were something sacred or precious. It is dead—quite dead, yet the pink tint has not yet left the rose-leaves, nor is their fragrance fled. No, he does not kiss it, dear reader, nor hide it away next his heart. I'm very sorry you are disappointed, but don't blame me for the tutor's want of sentiment. Shall I tell you what he does with it? he holds it at arm's length, and then flings it away with his strong right hand as far as he can among the rustling trees and green undergrowth. "It will live longer there," he mutters; "the dews of heaven will visit it morning and evening, and when it does decay, it will be imperceptibly in moist sweet wastings, not in dry stiff cracklings, as though it had been through some cruel fire." He walks on a few paces, till he comes to the broken-down place in the hedge where Maizie climbed through to the field. He glances at it care-

lessly, and then his eye catches sight of something red behind the hedge. He does not think it is Maizie; he does not even know she is enveloped in her nation's colour; but, like the cow, he feels curious to see what the bright thing is; so he jumps over into the field to make investigations. Maizie is lying half in shade and half in sunshine, her little face, paler than its wont, and looking sadder than M. Valance has ever seen it, is lying quite in shadow, but a lock of her golden hair and one of the small, ringed hands are glimmering and flashing in the sunlight. M. Valance stands a yard away from her, and contemplates her with perhaps more intelligence and less indifference than his bovine predecessor. "Miss Maizie," he says; but his tone is so low and soft, it fails to wake her. How still she lies! how white A sudden insane fear seizes him. He calls her name sharply and loudly. She stirs uneasily, and half opens her eyes; but the sleep

of exhaustion is hard to break, and the heavy lids fall again upon the white cheek, and a little trembling breath of deep repose parts the soft lips. M. Valance goes down on one knee beside her, and lays his hand upon her sun-lit hand. "Miss Maizie!" She wakes at last. Her great eyes flash open, but she does not move. M. Valance rises to his feet.

"Come out of the sun," she says slowly; "you'll get a sunstroke without your hat."

"Not I. Miss Maizie, you had better be getting up; we have finished luncheon."

"I don't want any," she says; but she gets up from her reclining posture, and pushes back her ruffled hair.

"Don't want any? when had you your breakfast?"

"I had none; I didn't want any. I came here for a little quiet.

"And got it apparently; how long have you been asleep?"

"I don't know—since about twelve."

"It is now two; come, get up; do you know it is exceedingly dangerous to lie on the damp grass so long; you might catch your death."

He gives her his hand and helps her to her feet; no sooner is she fairly standing however, than she reels helplessly, and covers her face crying, "O I'm so giddy—so giddy!"

He puts his arm round her: "It is nothing, it will pass off in a minute, he says reassuringly, "you have been too long without food. Ah! here is Louis."

The boy has swallowed his luncheon as quickly as possible and hastened after his tutor.

"Ah! I've found you at last!" he cries running towards them. M. Valance lets the girl sink gently to the ground. "Stay with your sister," he says to Louis, "she is feeling giddy, while I go and fetch her a sandwich and a glass of wine."

Scarcely ten minutes have elapsed before

he again makes his appearance with a silver flask, and a plate of sandwiches. He kneels down beside Maizie, and pours out some wine into the flask-cup. He is panting a little, and his hand shakes.

"You have been running," says the girl reproachfully lifting her dim, faint eyes to his face.

"Running! and why shouldn't I run if I like? Eat, drink, and live, Miss Maizie, to reward me for my trouble."

She drinks the wine eagerly, and eats one of the sandwiches, and M. Valance has the satisfaction of seeing the colour come back to her cheeks and the clearness to her eyes. He sends Louis back to the house with the flask and the rest of the sandwiches. Then Maizie gets up, and they stroll about the sunny field. He wonders at her silence, for he knows her heart is full of wild protest, her soul burning with indignant resentment. He glances at her once or twice; his own face

shows whiter and sterner than usual in the brilliant noontide glare. Her eyes are cast down, her lips sealed and saddened. She stoops all at once, and picks a pretty, placid ox-eyed daisy; looks at it, and then throws it away with an angry, impatient sigh. It is the first time M. Valance has heard a sigh cross the fair red threshold of those soft young lips. He cannot bear it. He cannot stand by and see this fresh spirit droop and pine, this ardent life grow faint and saddened long—oh! so long before its time!

"Miss Maizie, I know your trouble—why don't you speak?" he says, and he stands still before her, with a sudden yearning in his dark eyes.

The girl looks up into his white, hard face, over which some old sorrow seems to shine, and hover with a strange pathetic light. It must have been a sorrow without sin, seeing the memory irradiates instead of darkening his face, feels Maizie, vaguely; and those

eyes, had they ever been bright and confident? — she could not imagine so; the pained patience in them seems to belong to them; they question hers now with the comprehensive persuasion of a mother's when she asks her sick child (whose every pang she knows) what ails her.

"Why don't you speak?" he repeats, wistfully. "It is not like you to be so reserved: tell me all about it; it will ease the pain."

Her lips quiver and part, and her eyes glisten and fill.

"I cannot bear it," she cries with sudden passion—"I cannot bear it."

"What cannot you bear?"

The trustworthy eyes that hold in their quiet depths the memory of some distant woe question her's still, with the same caressing interlocution.

"To lose—to give up this beautiful new joy, this bliss, which is so strange a mixture

of pain and pleasure—this divine fresh life with which every nerve is thrilling, and every pulse panting to perfect and demonstrate. M. Valance—M. Valance, it is *myself*—I cannot give up myself; it is impossible."

"No, not impossible."

"I tell you it is impossible! How should you know?—you have never felt, never—"

"Yes, I have felt it all. I was robbed of my youth's heritage under far crueller circumstances than you can even imagine, thank God!"

The fiery baptism of that past suffering is gleaming lurid in the dark eyes, and bringing out in wild relief the scars and torture lines of the brave, refined face. With the egotistical disbelief of youth in any suffering but its own, Maizie looks up with an expression of incredulity upon her lips, but the unarticulated disclaimer fails and dies away in a wail of piteous astonishment before the endless vistas of nameless agony opening to her in

the soul-disclosing gaze of the eyes that meet hers.

"How did you bear it?—Oh, God! how is it you are still alive?"

"Because there was no sin mixed with the suffering—no shame to weaken the spirit; for it wrestled with a sorrow pure as the angel that fought with Jacob and overcame—aye, and the bright Grief left a blessing behind it!"

A stern triumph glows over the tutor's worn face like the red light of dawn over a victorious host of slain and wounded. The girl looks upon it with a kind of awe, and then buries her face in her hands.

"I am not so strong," she sobs. "I have not your courage. I am only a girl, and it will kill me?"

He does not contradict her. He waits till the sudden burst of tears is over, and then takes one of her hands and leads her to a

clump of trees, under which a pile of felled timber is lying.

"Sit down," he urges, "and tell me all the facts of the case from beginning to end. What did your father say to you first when you went to him last night?"

"He spoke to me unjustly, harshly. He asked me what I meant by turning his house into a theatre. How I dared bring a lot of ladies and gentlemen together to listen to my 'ridiculous and idiotic rantings and stampings' —those were his very words. What on earth had put into my head the idea of making such a disgusting spectacle of myself?"

"Were those his words also?" asks M. Valance, a ruddy tinge staining his dark cheek, his eyes bent on the ground as if it would be dangerous to raise them just now.

"Yes, those were his very words, but he said worse than that after—" (A deep crimson spot is burning in each of Maizie's cheeks— burning ever brighter and brighter as she

proceeds):—"He said I was conceited, and empty-headed, and deceitful, to act before so many people without his permission. I had not spoken till then, and then I said he had given me permission to act—as he had done. He started up off his chair, and stamped, and said I was a liar like my mother——"

"He—your father was in a passion; he did not mean the tenth of what he said," interposes the tutor; but still he does not raise his eyes. "Did you reply to him at all? Did you defy him, and utter words you had better have left unsaid?" he adds inquiringly.

"I don't remember half I said. I lost all control of myself; I told him he accused me wrongly, and insulted me shamefully, and that I would not live a day longer under his roof than I could help. I told him I wished he had left me with the kind people who brought me up; that he had never claimed me as his daughter; that I had never known him as my father—" Maizie pauses with hea-

ving bosom, and tearful eyes too hot with indignation to let the tears fall.

"And then—did anything more pass between you?" questions her listener.

"Yes, while I was raving and scolding he suddenly grew quite calm, and when I stopped and began to cry, he led me to a chair quite gently, and told me to be silent for awhile till I was myself again—O dear!—O dear!" (breaking off in a piteous outburst of despair) "I feel I can never be that again: never be like I was before all this happened."

"No, you will be better, stronger, braver," says M. Valance, "but go on—I want to hear what your father said when you were both calm; he to speak, you to listen."

"Ah that is the worst part of all," says the girl with tragic emphasis, and the angry flush in her cheeks fades slowly out, leaving them white as winter moonshine, while the mobile lips grow set and stern.

"Will you not tell me what he said?" asks the tutor after an interval of some minutes.

"Yes," she answers, and her voice is so stern and low, no one would recognise in it Maizie's blithe tones—"though it is like repeating my own death-warrant. When I had sat still for some time, he approached me, and bending over me, told me to look in his eyes and swear solemnly that I would never again, under any pretext whatever, act, or personate any character. If I would do this, he would forgive me for the night's folly; all should be between himself and me as heretofore; he would never mention it again."

"And you?—you did not promise? asks the tutor, for Maizie's lips are closely compressed, and her eyes are gazing far away over the tree-tops, to a little fleecy cloud sailing in the dark blue ether like a bit of God's own peace in the untroubled depths of a true heart. He has to repeat the question twice before she

answers. Then the rigid lips curve and part in a smile of weary scorn as they form the word—

"No."

"What did you say? how did you word your refusal?" persists her questioner.

"I—as far as I can remember—I said I would rather die than make such a promise, and further added that it was my intention to go on the stage."

There is a long pause: Maizie sits with one hand supporting her chin, gazing far, far away towards the dim blue line of the distant coast. The tutor rises and paces slowly up and down before her. All the girl has been telling him of her and Sir Richard's conversation is not new to him. Already has he been closeted for the space of an hour in that gentleman's library, hearing the details of the difference, together with his pupil's avowed determination, despite alike the entreaties and commands of her father, to adopt a pro-

fessional career. The old baronet has been abject to him in his distress—has prayed him to use all his powers of persuasion, all his gifts of eloquence, to convince his rebellious daughter of the folly of her resolution. He has owned, with tears in his eyes, that he was hasty at first; that he would give all his possessions—"aye, and, gad! his wife and son too!"—to have the girl look into his face once more in the old loving way, and tell him she would do his bidding.

And M. Valance?—yes, he has promised to do his best to dissuade Maizie from her determination.

"Don't let her think you are commissioned by me," the old soldier had said, as he shook hands with his son's tutor, on receiving his promise—"mind you don't let her dream I am eager for her submission. It would not do, after what has passed between us. She must come to me seeking my forgiveness, and

binding herself by the vow I have demanded, before I can take her to my heart again."

M. Valance feels he has no easy task before him, as he pauses in his walk, and regards his pupil's white still face, and steady, absent eyes. Yet he must succeed, he tells himself, for in a measure he has been the cause of the unhappy state of affairs between the father and daughter. It would never do for him to feel he has, even unconsciously and unintentionally, darkened so sweet and promising a young life. No, she shall not fail, nor pine, nor grow hard and unloving. He will throw himself, into this breach in her young happiness, heart and soul! She shall not sink down in the horrid gulf of despair and desperation that has opened right before her in the gay flowery slope of her healthy lovesome youth. He will hold her back with a hand made strong by passionate solicitude, and "neither the angels in heaven above, nor the demons down under the sea," will be able to

wrench away his hold. Poor little lamb! straying out of the fold and the shelter, and standing amazed and trembling at its own daring on the bleak confines of the "outer world." He will lift it in his arms and bear it back to light and comfort—aye, he will carry it gently over the waste places and sharp rocks, and never weary of his sweet burden.

"Miss Maizie, what did your father say when you told him you wished to go on the stage?" he asks, seating himself beside her.

"I did not tell him I *wished* to—I said I *intended* to," corrects the girl. "Oh, he began to storm again, and finally ordered me out of the room, and told me not to address him again till I could ask pardon for my undutifulness, and concede to his wishes in every particular."

"When are you going to do so?"

"Never!—never!"

"Miss Maizie, do you love your father?"

asks M. Valance earnestly, laying his hand on her shoulder and looking in her eyes.

Maizie turns aside her head, and her lips quiver—the question touches the very nerve-centre of all her pain—the very core of all her bitterness. This new-found father of hers, who had held the supreme place in her heart—does still, only she doesn't know it—that he should speak so to her, he whom she had regarded as her best protector from the ills of life—the thought is almost breaking her young heart. She turns her head back again suddenly, her eyes, haggard and tired with their watching and weeping, flash through quick tears of wounded love, as she answers passionately—

"I did love him—I did, more than anyone in the world; I loved him, I trusted him, as I love and trust none other."

"And is it possible an hour's passion, a few angry words, have had power to cool your love and kill your faith?"

Very gravely and gently the tutor asks the question; Maizie shrinks away a little as she answers evasively:

"He said such things! he hurt me, he wounded me so cruelly!"

"And you—do you think you said nothing to pain and grieve him in your turn?"

"He provoked it. But, M. Valance, even if I could forgive his unjust, unloving words, there is yet a greater wrong which I can never brook—his unfatherly, unkind, pitiless demand that I should promise never to make use of a heaven-sent gift—never live my full life—never give my spirit freedom to exercise its natural bent, but tie it down with the harsh, cold bands of his own vile prejudices—never to give the panting, vehement longing vent—never to let the straining, struggling power find expression or relief! O God! O God! to be imprisoned for life—anything but that!—anything but that!"

The clear flashing eyes grow wild and

scared at the idea of such soul-bondage; the little hands clasp and wrench each other in a mute passion of rebellion.

"You love your father, Miss Maizie—you love him tenderly, as he loves you. Your heart is hot with resentment just now at his hasty words—words which I happen to know he did not mean. He has been asking after you to-day; he was restless and uneasy at your absence; he is longing to be at peace" (O, M. Valance, is that the way you attend to the old man's injunction?)—"with you. The sacrifice he demands of you has arisen from the anxious depths of his great love for you."

"I do not believe it!—I do not believe it! Love could never be so cruel."

"Your father has a horror of acting—it amounts almost to a monomania with him. If he cared less for you, he would not impose such conditions on you. My child" (laying his hand on the bowed head, from which her hat has fallen, with a steady caressing touch,

infinitely soothing)—"supposing you had a desperate malady, for which no cure could be found, and which would certainly terminate fatally unless an operation fraught with utmost pain and agony were performed—what kind of love would that be that held you away from the surgeon's knife, sparing you the saving anguish, to let the loathsome disease destroy you inch by inch?"

No answer, only a moaning sigh, as the fair head sinks lower.

"Miss Maizie, you say this sacrifice your father's love requires of you would kill you;—what do you think his own life would be worth were you to run counter to his dearest wish?"

Maizie attempts no response. She seems to see a proud, soldier-like head drooping and listless; a brave quick gait growing slow and tottering; strong kind hands tremulous and feeble, and all because of her;—and then later on another inscription above the Brook-

lyn vault, which she would have to come and read, perhaps, when the world had crowned her. Yes, she would have to stand in the quiet little church some summer evening with the dying sunset hues gleaming softly through the window, like they did last Sunday evening as they sat together, her hand in his. She would stand there all alone in the pride and flush of glorious success and world-wide fame —stand there, having worked out her own will, and lived her own full true life and built herself an everlasting name—and have to read that other name, carved in white — gleaming, dazzling white, with the red sunrays lying on it like flecks of blood, as if to hint of murder done. A sharp wild cry bursts from Maizie's lips at the mere thought of the poignant, searching pain of that possible remorse. She throws herself face downwards all along the rotting timber, and lies as one dead.

"Take courage, little one; the way is very

plain before you. You see the perfect flower of your content and joy (or you think you do) growing on a pleasant knoll quite within reach of your hand, temptingly near; but it is unfortunately, hopelessly entangled, and bound about by a clinging, sensitive tendril, called Natural Affection, which, if you pluck your costly toy, it will be necessary to uproot, and break, and cast to the winds of heaven. Clasp those little yearning hands in prayer, my child, lest they should reach out in hot impulse and seize the sweet full-blown flower of your Desire — lest they should commit sacrilege and tear away in a passion of ruthless haste the dark-leaved evergreen planted there by God. Pass on, little one! the way is very plain; pass on, and leave them growing together, the white starry Hope, guarded by the vine-like creeper Love. What if the too-close embrace of the dark-leaved plant should cause your fair white blossom to fade —never mind, there are other flowers on

ahead, though your eyes are too blinded with regret to see them now. There is a weed also, the old Roman soldiers thought fairer than any flower—a bitter, dull-leaved weed, telling of sorrow and conflict and loss, which they used to bind about their bleeding brows with a stern triumph. Are you strong enough to wear it, Miss Maizie?"

M. Valance bends over the girl, and his voice sinks into a murmur infinitely winsome as he asks the question.

No answer. There is terrible pain and darkness in the young soul. To herself, the girl feels as if she is lying helpless and sore-wounded even to death, trying to hold a treasure to her heart which gentle persistent hands have grasped, and are slowly but surely forcing from her. She almost wishes it over, the lingering wrench, the dull dragging pain. It can but end one way: already it is slipping from her hold—already her fingers are loosening. The desolation of her impending be-

reavement is already oppressing her. She will throw it away, and have done with it—she will throw it away and lie down somewhere out of hearing of that pleading voice, out of reach of those persuasive hands, and die. She rises up from the hard, rough timber, white—white as death—and faces the tutor.

"You need not say any more," she mutters. "Don't say any more. I—I—you have conquered!"

M. Valance does not answer. A great fear seizes his heart as he looks on her face. Will it kill her? Has he miscalculated her strength? Like a flash the thought comes: the old man's life is nearly run; the girl's, so young and fresh, surely it should be saved at all costs. Involuntarily he stretches out his hand towards her; it is a strange gesture, half-fearful, half-yearning. She shrinks away from it, and rises to her feet.

"I must go in. I'm tired—tired to death!"

"Don't go just yet; wait one moment. Tell me—tell me—"

"What?" she asks, looking back at him with solemn, tired eyes.

"Are you strong enough to wear this crown of thorns, or will the slow blood-drops turn you sick?"

He has taken hold of her dress, and is looking at her with eyes full of agonising doubt, of intense, breath-catching anxiety,

"I don't know" (putting her hand up to her brow with a weary gesture). "I cannot answer any more questions. I am tired. Let me go."

"My child—my child!" (the deep voice trembling and thrilling, the dark face whitening, the strong hands holding her still)—"you are but a child—is this thing too hard for you?"

Oh, it is cruel, cruel, this thrusting back of the resigned desire—this regiving of the beautiful, bruised hope! Now, when she has

no strength left to choose the good from the evil — now, when the strained hands and stunned heart have no power left either to take or push away, either to renounce or claim!

Yes, it is cruel, but M. Valance feels nothing but the surging of a supreme compassion for the young desolated soul looking from out the ghostly stricken face of the girl before him. All other considerations, previous resolutions, and fixed intentions, have fled before this sudden, insupportable fear. *If she should die!* The great grey eyes drooping, and heavy with the struggle, question his with weary bewilderment. Then, as they read the tender dread, the infinite solicitude, a sudden light shoots into them—a marvellous great radiance, an undying trust and confidence, succeeded immediately by a peace so sweet, so restful, it must be somehow akin to that which shines in the first "resurrection gaze" of tearless eyes upon the "land so far away."

"Not strong enough alone—not strong enough, but you will help me—you will stand by me. I cannot fail nor die if you hold me up!"

And she falls at his feet in a passion of warm relieving tears.

CHAPTER XI.

" Oh, the meanest thing is pride!—
Better coward fear."
—*Hop-picking.*

RECONCILIATION.

It is eight o'clock in the evening. The great orange-yellow harvest-moon has risen from behind the dusky trees, and is hanging in the pale evening sky with a ruddy flush on her calm face, as if bashful at being seen there, without her dark bridegroom, the Night. Some of her warm-coloured beams are striking in athwart the window-shutters of Sir Richard's library, catching some of the books on the massive writing-table, on their way to the opposite wall, where they linger lovingly on a

small picture in a gold frame. It is a miniature painting, a portrait apparently, of a beautiful young girl, in a low dinner or ball dress, with a brilliant smiling face.

The room is very silent. There is only one occupant, and he is an old man. It would seem his thoughts are sorrowful to-night, for he has been sitting at the writing-table with his elbows resting on it, and his grey head bowed upon them for the last half-hour. He looks up slowly, and his dim old eyes meet the great golden orb looking in at him with serene indifference. He rises impatiently. Moonlight may be very soothing and calming, and comforting to those whose sorrows are long-past sorrows—to those who own old, half-dead griefs, from which all bitterness and fretfulness has alike fled; but when one's heart is full of anxious care or the quick throbbing of a new wound, the pale orb's changeless stare is simply maddening.

Sir Richard turns from the still summer

sky and its great golden treasure, and as he does so his eye catches the miniature, on which a halo of reddish light is resting. He walks up to it with unsteady steps, gazes at it long and wistfully, then reaches trembling hands, and takes it gently and carefully off the hook.

It is growing dark now, almost too dark for anyone to discern the pictured face, save one, to whom every outline, and shadow, and tint is familiar. Sir Richard lifts it to his lips, kissing it passionately again and again.

"My darling," he murmurs, "do you know about it now, I wonder?—all the love I bore you, all the pain you gave me!"

He sits down in his old place, and holds the portrait in a moonbeam, growing white and silvery now as the darkness gathers, holds it tightly, gazing at the sweet laughing face, with its careless lips and limpid eyes, earnestly and long.

"So like — so like!" he whispers, and

heavy tears rise and dim the cold blue eyes, that have not wept for years. Splash!—a large drop falls on the fair girl-face; the hands that hold the picture relapse; the old man's head sinks on his arms again, and there is silence in the chamber, while the moon rises ever higher and higher in the darkening sky, and the pale restless stars peer down with a gaze half-curious, half-affrighted.

Twice a timid knock comes on the door, but the old man is too absorbed in his dismal reverie to heed it. For a third time it sounds entreatingly—tap, tap. He does not hear it, he does not move. The door opens softly, a figure stands there—a figure in white; the room is pitchy dark now, except where a silver sheet of moonlight lies partly on the floor and partly on the bowed grey head. The figure advances slowly with uncertain, reluctant steps—advances till it stands beside the old

man, quiet and white as the moonbeams themselves.

"Father!"

Aye, he hears the voice, though it is not raised above a whisper. He lifts his head instantly, regards the young face bending over him, and then Sir Richard pushes out his chair and rises to his stately height in all the dignity of parental displeasure. He clears his throat. He is glad, so glad to see her, that he is fain to assume a preternaturally stern manner to conceal his joy. But, alas! how is Maizie to know that? When she saw him sitting at the table with bowed head, she could have knelt and asked his pardon; but now as he stands before her, stiff and proud, waiting and expecting her submission as his due, she feels all the old defiance rising, all the hard, bitter thoughts returning. Alas! alas! must it all begin over again? Has the long exhausting conflict been all in vain?

Was the hard-won victory not a real one after all? Maizie bows her face in her hands, as she stands before him, in helpless misery.

"What have you come to tell me, Maizie?"

The Baronet's voice sounds very cold and stern by reason of the terrible effort it costs him to prevent it trembling.

No answer. The girl feels as if an icy hand were laid upon her heart, freezing all its warm affection and generous devotion to chill indifference.

Sir Richard stands waiting for his daughter to speak, with the agonised expectation of one waiting outside a beloved's sick-room door for the doctor's verdict of life or death. Is he going to lose her after all, this beautiful human flower that he loves more than everything in the world? His wrinkled old face turns a deathly hue. His hands are clenched. His stony eyes fix themselves upon the drooping head and shrinking form with the immutable intensity of mortal suspense.

Human Pride! what broken hearts you have to answer for!—what wasted homes, what desolated wanderers!—what stained and desperate souls! Out upon you—out! How dare you interpose your fiendish shape here in the space of holy moonlight between the father and the child?

"Have you nothing to tell me—*Maizie?*"

Thank God for the hoarse falter in his voice as he named her name — for the yearning entreaty that stole into it despite himself!

Maizie looks up quickly, so quickly that she catches the loving hunger in the cold blue eyes, the tender, sorrowful expression of the face she had thought so stern a moment since, and learns beyond all doubting the reality of her father's ceaseless love. In an instant she is on her knees before him.

"I am sorry—sorry! I will promise what you wish."

Before the first words are sobbed, the

proud, undemonstrative old Baronet is holding her to his heart, raining kisses and tears upon her face like a woman.

"My darling, my darling, my own little girl! I knew you would not break my heart."

"Oh, papa, love me—love me! The fight has been so terrible, I should never have conquered if it had not been for M. Valance."

"Did he aid my child—did he help her against herself, and restore her to my arms? If so, I owe him more than I can ever hope to repay."

"He did, papa, he did" (clinging closer and laying her cheek against her sire's)—"and he was so patient and so good to me—he would not leave off trying to help me, though I was hard and passionate. He would not let me go—he showed me things so plainly—he did not grow tired."

"God bless him!" ejaculates Sir Richard, as he strains his recovered treasure to him with sudden vehemence, and then holds the

golden head away from him, and looks with fond possessive eyes into the sweet tear-stained face.

Poor little soft face! It shows very wan in the moonlight, and the great tired shadows under the beautiful wet eyes are dark as night, but it is not the same face that scared the tutor this afternoon: the curves are softened and gentle, the lips quivering with a tremour of emotion, pure of bitterness or wrath; the large eyes inexpressibly sad, but clear and peaceful as a child's.

"You look worn out, darling! Did you not sleep last night?"

"No, not much, my heart was so sore and restless."

Sir Richard kisses the pure brow, and smooths back the fair hair with tender trembling hands.

"My poor little child!—my poor little motherless Maizie! will she forgive her cross old father for his hasty, unjust words?"

No answer, but the touch of soft lips upon his wrinkled cheeks, and the twining of gentle hands about his neck. There is silence in the room again, a blessed silence, while the hearts of father and daughter draw very near together, for the dark Shape that held them apart has fled away into the night.

* * * * *

Sir Richard rings for lights before he bids his daughter good-night. He has something to show her, he says. When the tall wax candles have been brought, and the fussy white-legged footman has closed the shutters and departed, Sir Richard picks up the miniature lying on the table and places it in his daughter's hands. Maizie has seen the portrait before hanging in its place on the wall, but she has never had a good look at it.

"It is like me—a little—is it not?" she asks, hesitatingly, regarding it intently for a few moments—"only prettier."

"Yes, it is like you, assents Sir Richard,

coming and looking over her shoulder. Then, looking up from the picture to the face bending over it—"Yet there are some essential differences which I have scarcely noticed till to-night. Your forehead is not the same shape at all" (pointing to the portrait and indicating the difference with his finger-nail, —"This brow is nearly flat, and sinks slightly at the temples. Yours is full and round, and wider than the rest of your face. Your eyes are very like, only darker, and your mouth—yes, very like, only the upper lip is shorter. Your nose—no, your nose is not like: hers is straight and low, yours is curved and cut, more like your father's, I fancy" (touching the member in question with a smile). "Curious how your faces differ, when the features are compared separately, and yet bear such a strong, even startling resemblance taken as a whole! Your hair" (taking up the long waving masses in his hands)—"ah, that is your mother's over again!"

"My mother's!—was *she* my mother?" (looking up from the portrait with startled eyes).

"Yes, she was your mother."

Maizie looks at the pictured face again wonderingly.

"How happy she looks! I have a dim—dim remembrance of my mother—I suppose it was my mother—taking me on her lap and singing pretty songs to me. I cannot remember her face, only the smart rustling dress she had on, and her gold bracelets. Poor mamma!" (kissing the portrait)—"she must have died very young?"

"Yes, very young—only twenty-nine. Maizie!—Maizie!" (snatching away the miniature, and holding out his hands to her yearningly, entreatingly)—"she broke my heart, Maizie!—she left me desolate, despairing, comfortless!"

"Not now, papa darling!"

"I loved her more than life!" moans the

Baronet, brokenly, "and she—she didn't care enough for me to sacrifice one whim or fancy. Oh, my Maizie, my little girl, don't leave me—don't leave me! My heart has been so desolate and lonely all these years! If I were to lose your sweet comfort now, it would kill me."

A shiver runs through the girl-form clinging to him, for Maizie sees again the little twi-lit church, the white letters of a new inscription, the red sunset light.

"I will never leave you," she cries, earnestly—"never! Dear papa, don't be sorrowful! I love you better than anyone else in the world!"

Then he blesses her, and kisses her many times, and she leaves the room to seek the rest she so much needs. On her way upstairs she encounters Lady Brooklyn.

"Good gracious, child, how white you look! Where have you been all the evening? Where is Sir Richard?"

"In the library. I am going to bed — good night, mamma," says the girl.

"Good night, dear," responds her ladyship, touching her step-daughter's cold cheek with her thin lips—"good night, and wake up bright and cheerful to-morrow morning like a good girl."

Bright and cheerful!—how the words hurt her, like a harsh major chord played immediately after the falling of a minor cadence.

Bright and cheerful! Would she ever be so again? she wonders. She thinks not, and begins to wish feebly that somehow she could live always in a quiet twi-lit world, and never see anybody but her father and mother and Louis, and perhaps M. Valance—no, not M. Valance: her thoughts of him are not quiet enough. And she would want to be quiet—very quiet, so as not to rouse the sleeping pain in her heart. It is asleep now, judging from the strange cold stillness that she feels in every nerve. If she could only live a per-

fectly calm life, perhaps she might glide away into the dark River itself, without experiencing the cruel waking throe of conscious loss. Ah! Maizie, Maizie, if this were possible, then indeed the keenest twinge, the most intolerable bitterness of earthly suffering, would be done away with.

But alas! neither Nature nor our fellow-creatures permit the cool, easeful cloak of silence and darkness to hide the hideous yawning wounds of our battle-thrusts, and soothe their worst throbbings. No, no, the sun does not spare us one of his hot glad rays because our eyes are aching from last night's weeping; the dim blue sky so far above us, so calm in its sublime indifference, does not veil the unearthly beauty of its azure deeps, nor shadow one of its glorious sunset hues, because in our hearts the clouds of distrust and betrayal have gathered and shut out the heaven of our hope, and shrouded for ever the passion-glow of our happiness in the

dull twilight of despair. And the earth—the smiling, unconscious earth, with its dim distant mountains draped in dreamy mist, and its near hills clothed in a garb of living green and garlanded with flowers, with its laughing streams and grand contented rivers, with the thrilling murmur of its waving trees, with the dewy sweetness of its glad spring meadows—are these things the same as when we looked upon them yesterday with that one who has stolen away from our side for ever? The same?—no, no! but a thousand times fairer—a thousand times more mockingly lovely in the ruthless exuberance of their careless, cruel beauty. The "might have beens" lingering in the shadowy dells soften them to a diviner gloom. Every note of the lark's rapture is agonisingly distinct, vibrating in the stillness left by the beloved voice. These flowers upspringing at our feet, surely they did not use to grow thickly, to bloom so

profusely, or was it because our eyes missed them, gazing on a face beside us?

Oh! there was mercy in the two-edged sword that drove our Parents from the scene of their sinless bliss—mercy in the steely glimmer that prevented their re-entering the glorious Garden when once the curse of shameful mortality had shadowed their spirits!

Poor little May! she sleeps calmly and peacefully through the moonlit night. Her young spirit has shaken off the unaccustomed trammels of sadness, and is sporting itself in serene, untroubled gladness among the fair dream-flowers of youthful sleep. Towards morning the thoughts and visions that haunt her in that vague, dim world, shut off from the real world by the thick soft veil of unconsciousness, grow more vivid and distinct in colour and form. She is walking in a fair garden, walking and looking for something.

She cannot stay to smell the stately roses nor the white coy lilies till she find her treasure. Where can it be? Oh, if some one would only show her where it hides! for every moment the pain of her yearning is growing stronger. Must she leave this pleasant garden, and seek it elsewhere? Ah! what is this sudden change?—the birds no longer sing; the flowers are drooping; thorns and thistles and ugly weeds are springing up in the green sward. It is growing very dark. Night has come. The garden is a wilderness, and she cannot seek her hidden want any more. Then suddenly the dark face of M. Valance, with the same strange look in his eyes they wore yesterday, flashes close before her out of the darkness, and she wakes.

Oh! it is hard, this waking, full of health and strength and vivid stirring hope, in the free sunny morning, to feel the first cold

check of the clanking irons that have been fastened and soddered over-night!

The sun streams in through the half-closed shutters; the morning breeze comes through the window, left open a hand-breadth, bearing the fresh scent of newly-wakened flowers, and the piping and chattering of hungry birds that have but an hour since taken their drowsy ruffled heads from under their wings, and hopped off their dewy night-perches in search of breakfast.

What a gladsome, hopeful world it is! Full of healthy strivings, and brave endeavours, and busy, fruitful labour! Maizie starts up joyously from her pillow, and then for the first time in all her brief glad life she turns away with a groan from the merry gleam of the morning sun, and hiding her wide-awake grey eyes in the pillow, longs for the solemn, silent night, with the passionate, fretful longing of a hurt child for its mother's arms.

CHAPTER XII.

" Silent she sat, his am'rous breath to hear,
With calm and steady eyes—her heart was otherwhere."
—*Alex. Smith* (*Lady Barbara.*)

A GARDEN PARTY.

A FAIR September day, warm and still. Yellow leaves lying under the stately trees, through which a faint shiver passes now and then as they feel their summer's glory dropping from them. Brave old trees, never budging from their posts, never hanging their heads, nor drooping their sturdy arms through all the winter's cold and storm, nor the autumn's slow decay, bearing with like equanimity the pleasant heat of the kingly sun and the chill of the icy snow. Stupid, insensate trees—

foolish vegetable life, without protest or aim, shall I praise you for your patience? Nay, then, I should have to begin with the stones —the flints that we trample under foot, the pebbles that the sea grasps in its rough foam fingers, and flings hither and thither with insulting carelessness. Patience—alas! that word, in all its sorrowful signification, belongs only to the human race. "To bear to suffer" —not from the pressure of force, nor the goad of fear exercised by superior will, but voluntarily to stoop and raise the burden— voluntarily to bear it through the long hours. To conquer the revolt of the faculties against pain and discomfort, to subdue and restrain the emotions and desires by a sustained effort of the individual will, this is human patience in the fullest and highest meaning of the word, and this patience is a virtue very rare and costly.

Old people are patient? Not at all. There is little or no effort of the will required to

still their faculties. Nature becomes quiescent at length. With diminished strength rebellion has died. The spring of life has waxed too faint for impulse. The will itself grows weak from lack of exercise. Habit is sufficient to guide and control the actions. Patience!—no, but the dull apathy of a slow pulse and sluggish blood. Patient!—yes, as the ass is patient, or the over-worked horse, or the dog trained by the lash. If, as it sometimes happens, old people are *im*patient —that is, restless, discontented—who so hard to pacify and please? The nerves have become morbidly irritated, and the will is no longer strong enough to control or restrain. The unreasoning and unreasonable fractiousness of helpless infancy returns, and the last state of the man is worse than the first. The young of the human species generally credited with patience are those whom nature has blest with placid temperaments and no special taste or passion. The intense shades and

vivid lights of life all blend and mix in the pleasant cheerful twilight of their unimpassioned souls. Never despairing, never exultant, and so the world calls them patient. Ah, well, let it pass. The term is of little consequence, after all; and as they don't use our language up Yonder, its misapplication down here will not puzzle the Recording Angel.

Lawn-tennis is being played with much zest on Castle Grange lawn;—that is, ladies in gay-coloured costumes, and gentlemen with hatless heads and red faces, are rushing frantically hither and thither in mad pursuit of a small gutta-percha ball, making fierce efforts to hit it with rackets with which they are all provided. A net is placed between the opposing parties (if there can be opposing parties where every one seems equally possessed with an unreasoning spite against a bit of gutta-percha), as if to prevent them coming to blows. It is an exciting game, apparently, for a constant fire of small

screams is kept up by the lady-players, while the less nervous sex raise their voices in urgent commands and directions, such as—"Hit it, Miss Wilson!"—"Please stand further in!"—"By Jove, that was a nasty one!"—"No twisters!"

Sitting on a garden-bench under one of the yellowing trees, a couple of persons are looking on at this highly interesting and exhilarating game.

"Miss Maizie," one of them is saying, a tall, swarthy man, known by the name Captain Brace, late of the 101st Light Infantry, "do come away from here. I am sure you must be tired of this stupid noise, and stupider game."

And Maizie—let us take a look at her after all these days. She is dressed in white, and her beautiful hair is still allowed to ripple to her waist in unmolested and unrestrained freedom. Just at this moment she is smiling. She is exactly the same as ever. After all,

what difference could a month make? Stay a moment.—Ah! now her lips are grave again. What quiet curves they take! and her eyes, those dancing, flashing grey eyes—what has come to them? Ah, my friend, here is the quality I spoke of a paragraph or two back—here is patience!—not pseudo-patience, not dulled-eyed apathy, nor placid-eyed inanity, nor leaden-eyed insensibility, but patience—the tender, mysterious, ever-present pain that keeps the soul awake, and makes the eyes clearer and deeper, and the heart purer and stronger, day by day—day by day.

Sad to see such an expression in the eyes of one so young? Yes, sad, in that it speaks of a bygone conflict, but not sad in itself, for it is the badge of a brave soul at bay before unconquerable pain.

"Come away," says again the man at her side, with some impatience. "I have scarcely spoken a word to you yet. Come into the

wood, and leave these people to their imbecile antics."

Maizie's grey eyes look up rather astonished at the brusque, excited tone.

"They are my father's guests," she says quietly. "I cannot go away and amuse myself when they are here."

"Just a turn—just one turn. We will be back here in ten minutes," pleads the Irishman, eagerly.

Just at this juncture Sir Richard saunters up to the bench.

"Well, Maizie, sitting still?" he asks, with a smile.

"I have just been asking Miss Brooklyn to take a turn round the gardens," puts in the Captain; "but she says she cannot, as she has to look after the lawn-tennis players."

"Where is Lady Brooklyn?" asks the Baronet.

"In the drawing-room, showing Lady Lacy some old china," answers Maizie.

"So you are keeping guard here, in her absence—is that it?" (putting his hand caressingly under her chin). "Never mind; I'll give you leave to quit your post; I'll take your duty—not a very arduous one, if it consists in sitting under this tree, and surveying the players."

"Come along, Miss Maizie," says Captain Brace, springing up with alacrity, and offering the Baronet his seat. "I've been wanting to see that rose for the last month, and you promised faithfully to show it me the first opportunity."

"Go, dear," says the father, settling himself comfortably on the bench. "Though you are a hostess, there is no reason why you should not enjoy yourself."

So Maizie gets up, very reluctantly, be it said, and strolls off in company with the gallant captain. Sir Richard nods his head approvingly after them.

"A good match—a good match, from all

points of the compass," he mutters. "Estates adjoining—shouldn't lose sight of her—splendid income—kind-hearted—fond of her—h'm, h'm, h'm!"

"Which rose is it you wish to see?" asks Maizie, as they pass among the borders full of gay autumn flowers. "The standards are a little further this way."

"Rose!—pshaw! I don't want to see any rose. I've enough of 'em in my own garden to set up ten flower-shows."

"You said—" begins Maizie.

"Oh, one excuse is as good as another."

"As bad, you mean."

"Bad or good, it has answered my purpose, and got you away from the crowd."

"Crowd!—what crowd?" asks Maizie, coldly, for her companion's manner is not pleasant, neither is the persistent gaze of his fierce light eyes.

"That crowd of people on the lawn, whose

antics you found so much more amusing than my poor attempts at conversation."

"Captain Brace, what is the matter with you?" (standing still and looking at the clouded face of her escort). "You are as cross as—as—I have never known you so cross."

Thus admonished, the Captain looks rather ashamed of himself.

"Because I've been tantalised," he grumbles, wantonly knocking off the stately dahlia heads with his cane—"horribly tantalised, not only this afternoon, but every day for the last month. You are so cold to me—you keep aloof from me—you are barely civil."

"And you are not even *barely civil*," (smiling and holding out her hand). "Come, don't look as if you wanted to annihilate me on the spot. I don't want to quarrel. We used to be such good friends."

"Used we?" (grasping the little hand and

bending down to look into the grey still eyes) —"then why have you grown so cold to me, so unkind, so indifferent?"

"I have not," asserts Maizie, frankly; then correcting herself, and colouring a little, as a glimmering of something reaches her from out the earnest, unwavering glance of the Captain's eyes—"at least I did not know —didn't intend—I have not felt quite myself lately."

He lets go her hand, and they walk on silently for some time. At last the continued silence begins to weary Maizie. It is not usual for Captain Brace to lose his tongue; like most Irishmen, he has a good deal to say for himself, as a rule. They have passed through the kitchen-garden into the shadowy walk, and are entering the little oak-wood.

"By-the-by" (Maizie turns to him with a little laugh), "I never told you, did I, that I trespassed in your wood one day, some time ago? I was in a hurry to join my brother on

the water, and so I cut right through your field into the plantation, and then through the wood, and over the wall to the beach. Will you forgive me? They told me you would be so angry if you found me trespassing."

"Forgive you! I wish you would trespass there every day, and tell me beforehand what time you intended making the raid."

"I was rather afraid of being caught in a man-trap, or shot by a keeper," (continues Maizie, narratively), "but I don't remember feeling in the least apprehensive about meeting you. I didn't know you then. Perhaps if—"

"If you had known me you would have been afraid—more afraid of me than the traps and guns?"

There is scarcely room for two people to walk abreast along that little path, but the Captain manages to keep by Maizie's side by dint of pushing and breaking his way through

bits of brushwood and overhanging boughs. As he asks the foregoing question he snaps a large obstructive branch with one hand, at the same time crushing down with his feet a tangle of brambles and old stumps.

"Yes, most likely; you are so tall, you know, and" (glancing rather mischievously at the broken bough) "so tremendously strong."

"You think I might have picked you up and run away with you? Well, it would have been a terrible temptation, almost as terrible as the one in Reade's novel. Have you read that book of his, by-the-way?"

"No, I'm not allowed to read everything. Is it interesting?"

"To some people. I don't think you would like it. Do you read much?"

"Yes, a good deal. I am going through Shakespeare with M. Valance. I never cared for it when I read it by myself, but he makes it so interesting, I like nothing better now."

"Ha! talk of the—"

M. Valance, with a book in his hand, emerges from the summer-house a few paces from them. He does not meet them, for he takes the path to the right, leading straight away from the little house.

"He has just vacated in time," remarks the Captain, who is regaining his usual good spirits and good temper. "Come and rest, Miss Maizie."

So they go and rest, and look out on the pleasant fields and mountains, with the wide blue strip of water between, bearing on its gently heaving bosom innumerable row-boats and sailing-boats, and puffing, beflagged steamers.

The Captain is very loquacious. Maizie is a trifle pensive. She is planning a little trip she intends making to-morrow.

"You have not been to see my mother for years," remarks Captain Brace, with tragic exaggeration. "Come to-morrow and take tea with her, and look at *our* roses; they're

twice as good as any your garden can boast of. Will you?"

"I beg your pardon—I did not quite catch what you said," apologises Maizie, coming back from her anticipations to her actual and present position.

"Will you come to-morrow and spend the—"

"To-morrow?—no, not to-morrow; I am engaged for the whole day," answers the girl unhesitatingly, with a certain quiet content in her voice which does not strike pleasantly on her companion's ear.

"Where are you going? What are you going to do?"

"I am going a pic-nic with my brother."

"Alone?"

"No; I believe a friend of his is coming with us."

"How stupid it will be for you."

"I do not think so."

"But it must be—it will be; you are not

a child—you have not a child's thoughts, nor a child's enjoyments; your brother's society for a live-long day will bore you to death."

"It will not—it is not necessary to be a child to enjoy children's society. My brother and I have many thoughts and feelings in common."

"Is the tutor going with you?"

"I don't know; I hope so."

"I don't envy you! between the prattle of a child, and the prosings of a preceptor."

"Let us be walking on."

"Are you tired of my company already?" asks the owner of Roche Court, reproachfully, as Maizie rises with a suppressed and carefully concealed yawn, which yet brings tears into her eyes.

"No!" (alas! for truth against politeness) "but it is cool sitting so long."

"Stay just a few minutes longer—just five minutes" (pulling out a gold hunting watch), "I have something to say to you, and

goodness knows when I shall have another opportunity."

"What is it?—make haste for I am getting cold," asks Maizie. She does not reseat herself, nor turn round, but continues standing, leaning against one of the supports of the summer-house, and looking away—away over the Straits—to the far distance. Five minutes pass silently. Maizie's thoughts are miles away from the occupant of the bench behind her; but she is vaguely conscious of waiting for something.

"Well!" she utters dreamily.

"Maizie!"

The Captain is standing beside her; he has taken one of her hands, and his light eyes, no longer fierce, but pleading and piteous as a wounded hound's, are gazing strainingly into her face. The girl gives a shocked start. What is this thing that has come to her? Could she have prevented it? O! how horrible to cause pain by sheer

heedlessness! It is no use thinking about that now. It is too late to do aught; but soften the truth that must be spoken quickly and firmly.

"Maizie! do you care for me a little?"

"No, no!"

The Captain's grasp of the little hand grows painful, and he twines his other arm round the girl's slight form.

"Hush!—you do—you know you do—your eyes have said so—you cannot be indifferent to any one who loves you as I do," (bending and kissing the struggling hand and half-averted cheek.)

"Let me go this instant! I tell you I do not care for you, not in the least!" cries Maizie, angrily, all her compassion for her lover, fleeing under his fatuous masterful wooing.

"Don't struggle so, you don't know your own mind yet, you are so young, so——"

"I do know my own mind perfectly as

regards you—I do not care for you—I never can care for you as long as I live!" asseverates Maizie, freeing herself from his embrace.

He releases her, and they stand staring at one another, both startled, one defiant.

"Never can care for me as long as you live," repeats the Captain incredulously, "am I an ogre, or a fiend, that you tell me this? O Maizie!" (his voice failing a little by reason of his pain) "are you sure you cannot like me—even a little—just a little? My darling, I would lay down my life for you!"

How unfortunate it is when one cannot love where one wants to love, where one is expected to love, where the calm hand of Destiny has led, where an honest heart lies at our feet waiting only for our hands to raise it, to be our very own for evermore.

Maizie looks at the whitening face and imploring eyes of the strong man before her, and wishes from her inmost heart that she

could accept his love, and sooth his pain. "Pity is akin to love," they say, but though the girl's whole soul is sickening with ruthful regret, she knows with a certainty and clearness that astonishes herself, that there is no particle of love mingled with the compassionate sorrow that stirs her heart. The waters of feeling are translucent in her young untried nature. She peers down, down through the mystic stormless depths, and discovers no germ of passion, no hint of an under-current that sets to Arthur Brace; no, not a ripple—not a bubble—hopelessly still—all the more hopelessly, perhaps, because no contrary eddy exists—no wayward battling spring bears the sweet waters from him—calm to him—cold to him in their undisturbed, untroubled freshness. Calm to him—cold to him in their full unclaimed, untrammelled freedom. The rain of his passion, the first that has fallen there, only stirs the surface, the responsive drops are but

sympathetic and momentary. She is very sorry, so sorry, that for a few moments she cannot command her voice to tell him so: she pales, and her lips quiver—

"When I said I did not care for you," she says, after a pause her voice a little unsteady, her hands trembling nervously, "I meant that I didn't care for you—as—as you wish. I like you; I have always liked you, and I am more sorry than I can say."

The Captain misinterprets her agitation, misunderstands her words.

"You do like me," (seizing her hands and gazing into her sweet shy face) "then darling——"

"Captain Brace, will you never understand! I like you as I like Louis, or Lucy, or anyone."

Captain Brace is twice Maizie's age, and a man of the world, thoroughly conversant with all the ins and outs of fashionable life. That he, with his handsome face and

engaging manners, backed with an income of fifteen thouand and a couple of the finest estates in the three Kingdoms; that he, the veteran of a score of London seasons, the *preux chevalier*, before whom the proudest and fairest dames had bowed, should be refused point blank by a country girl in her teens, without even an *affaire de cœur* to account for it, is simply incredible to him. He cannot understand it, and what he cannot understand, as is the case with most nineteenth century men, he cannot receive.

"Your liking will grow—I am content to wait—if you will tolerate me I will teach you to love me."

"Thank you! you are very kind, but you had better seek an apter pupil, my dull incapacity would incense you, your method of instruction would probably bore me. Quarrels between teacher and pupil are unpleasant, we will avoid them. Seriously, Captain Brace, I am tired of the subject, and as the five

minutes I promised you are long since over, and I am perfectly chilled, I must beg you to excuse me."

The girl turns to go, but the Captain bars her exit. If it were not for the signs of evident suffering on his face, Maizie's patience would be at an end; but the twitching of the dark moustache, the plaintive, softened look in the bold colourless eyes, touch the tender generosity of her woman's heart.

"Let me pass, please," she says gently; "I am so cold!" Then holding out her hand, and lifting her frank, innocent eyes to his—"Good-bye, Captain Brace—good-bye." Captain Brace's love is of that kind that is real enough while it lasts, and under certain circumstances it might perhaps last a lifetime; but, low be it spoken! it is not of the sort that can last under adverse conditions. It is, in fact, the love of the million: a love that burns warmly and brightly enough while hands are clasped in hands, but when these

hands are parted, parted by distance or death, fades and pales and dies, and its ashes before they are cold serve as a foundation for another fire, the flame of which will correspond exactly with its predecessor's on whose cinders it is built.

Captain Brace's love is real. He suffers keenly as the first conviction of its hopelessness comes to him in Maizie's frankly outstretched hand, and cold, gentle words.

"I will not give you up so easily," he says, his chest heaving, his eyes moistening. "I cannot give you up, Maizie—Maizie!"

The girl does not answer the protest—she sighs.

"I will not give you up," he repeats; but at the same moment he moves out of her way, and lets go her hand.

* * * * *

It is half-past six. The guests have all gone. The lawn is silent. In the garden, the roses that have been smelt, and admired,

and caressed, are hanging their heavy fragrant heads half ruefully, as if they miss the adulation of the gaily-dressed ladies that sauntered in their midst scarce an hour since.

M. Valance is strolling among them now, but he does not appear to notice them. His eyes are cast down, his hands clasped behind him. He reaches the wide-spreading tree at the further end of the garden, and throws himself down half under its sombre shadow, half in the rich yellow light that the dying sun is casting over grass and flowers. What is the matter? he asks himself, sternly. What is this abject depression stealing over him, and subduing him body and soul? He, who ought to have sufficient will to conquer such weak, womanish moods, here he is, prostrate, helpless, and ready to cry as a newly-weaned infant.

"It is preposterous, it is absolutely unmanly," asserts his Intellect, majestically.

"It is natural—it is unavoidable," moans his Heart; and forthwith they enter into an argument upon the subject.

"If you can't be heroic, at least be silent," urges Intellect, sneeringly.

"I can't be silent any longer; you kept me dumb all day, you have talked on and on about subjects I can't enter into, and pretended not to see the way all my old wounds were bleeding—bleeding drop by drop. I am lonely, starving, comfortless. I *will* complain."

"Pray what has opened all your old wounds, as you call them? Why are you so specially weak to-day?"

"As if you didn't know!—as if you didn't see the arrow when it sped!—as if you didn't speculate about it!—as if you didn't try and torture me with trying to pull it out until my blood gushed so, not only from *that* wound, but from all the old scars and hurts! You were disgusted, and had to give it up, in spite

of your boasted coolness," bursts out the poor aching Heart, indignantly.

"I should have extracted it in time, if you had only had the patience and fortitude to let me pull sufficiently hard and long," says Intellect, coolly. "I would try again now, only I'm rather tired. I shall be sure to pull it out in a trice to-morrow, after a night's rest."

"You shall not touch it again; you shall not torture me any more," sobs Heart.

"I can't think how it came to hit you. You couldn't have been wearing that armour I took such pains to make for you," remarks Intellect, dispassionately.

"It has become displaced lately. I loosened it to talk with another heart, and," confesses Heart, penitently—

"And forgot to re-fasten it?"

"No, not exactly; but—but it seemed so hard and chill, and I was afraid if that other

heart came again and found me cased in unsympathetic iron, it would be hurt."

"And so you laid yourself bare on spec., after all my warnings, and got mortally wounded! Serve you right — serve you right!"

"*Mortally* wounded? Then I shall die soon, and be free of my pain."

"I hope so, I'm sure. I'm heartily sick and tired of your constant moans and distracting tossings. Here, let me help you on with your armour in the meanwhile."

"Never! it is no longer any use to me; nothing can hurt me more. If this wound heals, it will leave a scar harder and more impenetrable than any amour you can devise. If it does not heal, I shall die."

Intellect is silenced, and M. Valance turns his face to the cool sweet grass, and lets his heart moan on at will.

Hush! What is that sweet, far sound?

Has his longing pain found a language, and is it soaring through the still evening air to tell its tale to God? Pooh! it is only some one playing the harmonium, and the air—it is one he knows—Schubert's "Addio." He lies still and listens, and Music fulfils her gracious office, and drags the stinging arrow softly from his heart, and brings the relieving tears to his eyes. Only another loss to one who has borne so many, only another sorrow to one whose life has been all sorrow, surely he can bear it. Bear it? the hard relentless discipline of years would have worked but little good else. Bear it? aye, as the valiant soldier covered with scars and medals from many a hard-won field bears what he knows is his last thrust from the enemy's spear, whispering "victory!" as he feels it piercing his brave heart, and keeping all the while his death-glazing eyes towards the foe. Bear it? yes, quite nobly, grudge him not these few burning tears, reader.

Not even his enemy denies the wounded warrior faint from loss of blood, the drop of reviving water Mercy sprinkles on his face.

The music has stopped, yet still the tutor lies motionless in the cool grass beneath the wide-spreading tree. Presently he hears the faint flutter and rustle of a woman's dress near him, or perhaps the wind has risen and is stirring the sapless leaves of the chestnut overhead. "M. Valance!" No, the wind has no such tones, no, not on moon-lit nights when he has risen restless and feverish from his couch to listen at the open casement for a fair faint echo in its soft low breaths of the voice that has haunted his dreams.

Maizie is standing by his side, his stately girl pupil with the wondering grey eyes that have questioned his with such clear intelligence day after day, turning from the perusal of some learned author to wait for an unfolding of the hard text from her tutor's lips.

What will they read there now? O! if she would only go away over the grass again with her light tread and rustling dress, and let him slink away and master the first keeness of his mad misery before his eyes meet hers. But she does not go, her feet are stayed by a tender sympathy, a wondering, half-awed pity. This man, her master, who has stood by and upheld her in her impatient sorrow through the past sad mouth—it must be something terrible that has weighed him down—that causes him, so stern, so cold, to lay his forehead against the daises with the self-abandonment of a woman.

"M. Valance," (the low voice trembling with divine compassion) "why are you so sad?"

The tremulous inquiry reaches the sorrowful spirit of the man. M. Valance forgets conventionality, forgets everything, and raising himself, he answers the girl's question soul to soul — answers it as sympathetic

natures respond to each other when they forget in the swift delicious certainty of being comprehended, all the thousand petty restraints and crotchety worldly customs that trammel the intercourse of us mortals.

"Because the way has been so long and dreary, and there were none to help—none."

Like a bird from a bough she drops on the grass by his side—noiselessly, swiftly.

"But you won through, M. Valance, though men held aloof. However hard your life has been—and I know partly from your words, and partly from your eyes, that it has been terribly strangely, cruelly hard—you have lived it nobly, purely and unselfishly. You must not be sorry now; the pain is over; You must remember only the triumph."

M. Valance does not reply in speech; he holds out his hand towards Maizie, as one man holds out his hand to another man who has done him a service past the meed of words—holds it out, and then as he meets

the great grey eyes full of a loving sympathy, and the little jewelled hand stretched out in quick response, he withdraws his own, suddenly and passionately, and turns brusquely away from his comforter, muttering, scarce above his breath :

"But the pain is not over—Oh, God! the pain is not over!"

Who can fathom the sympathetic intuition of a woman? Whence learn they this art of consolation, this keen divination of where the suffering lies, and how to heal it?

Maizie creeps nearer, and taking the hand, so rudely withdrawn, in both hers, she bends over it, lower—lower, till her lips touch it. M. Valance, lying by her side, with his head propped upon one arm, does not turn nor move when he feels the mute caress of those innocent lips upon his hand. The bitter-sweetness of the moment is indescribable. The whole heart of the man is in a whirl of mingled pain and bliss. He cannot speak.

He dare not look at her before whom his soul is lying prostrate in the wild homage of love's first surrender.

Fortunately the tutor has no slight power of self-control; and though in the delirious blaze of passion that flares through his being, he cannot discern the steady light of either reason or conscience; and though his heated brain is no longer capable of consecutive thought or distinct knowledge, his will — supreme, undaunted, and unshaken by the fiery revolt of his senses—takes strong command of them and of his straining, yearning soul; blind, deaf, dumb, unconscious even of his whereabouts, he manifests no outward sign of emotion. His face averted, his strong right-hand lying where Maizie has placed it on the grass, he waits in stirless silence till the paroxysm shall pass away. It is brief, as God, who knows how weak is the strongest human will, has mercifully ordained such wild war with feeling shall be.

Maizie is speaking to him. At first he cannot hear, nor understand; but gradually the mists and the thickness that encompass him roll away. * * *

"Not all pain, but the worst pain. You can never suffer alone again."

M. Valance turns his face to the girl at last, and she is startled by its ghastly hue.

"Oh! you must have suffered, if the memory can hurt you so; but it is over now," (tears of tenderest compassion filling the understanding eyes,) "and you can never suffer alone again, for when you suffer I suffer. I feel your pain as though it were mine."

M. Valance regains the voice he has been fighting for—the cool, kind words, the smiling gratitude.

"Thank you, Miss Maizie; your sympathy is very precious to me, but—but 'the heart knoweth its own bitterness,' and my pupil"

(smiling brightly, though his face is still terribly white) "is too young to be overshadowed by the grim sorrows of age. I cannot permit it."

"It is not fair; it is scarcely kind to speak so," objects Maizie, impulsively. "You, who have soothed and helped me all these dreary days—you, to whom I have told all my worries and disappointments, and sore depressions—will not allow me to touch your burden with my little finger. It is not fair; it hurts me."

"But you have helped me, Miss Maizie, more than you are aware of; yes, and comforted me too," says M. Valance, who has risen to his feet, and is standing over the girl, looking down on her with a grave, sweet smile.

"Have I?" she asks, looking up, her rippling hair, that the sun is catching at, falling away from her face in sheets of shimmering gold; "I am glad."

M. Valance is silent: he turns away from the fair upturned face, and his dark eyes, growing strangely dreamy, seek the west, where the sun, looking like a ball of liquid fiery light, is tinging the sky with its glory. Maizie looks at the tutor's still, thoughtful face and dreamy, wondering eyes, and steals softly away. She has seen him look like that once or twice before, and when she has spoken to him, he has not responded. She has never persisted in her efforts to rouse him, because of the musing sweetness of his eyes, like one in a happy dream.

M. Valance does not notice his pupil's departure. He continues in his abstraction till the golden ball has sunk behind the horizon, and the garden is wrapt in shadow. Then he stirs, looks round, sees his hat lying on the wet grass, and picks it up.

"It has all happened before somewhere, somehow," he mutters, "and I cannot think where, nor how."

CHAPTER XIII.

"Sweet is true love, though giv'n in vain—in vain!"

A PLEASANT DAY.

"MOST provoking!" says her ladyship, emphatically—"most provoking!"

She and Sir Richard Brooklyn are closeted together in the latter's library, discussing a certain gallant officer's proposal to their daughter, which event has caused Lady Brooklyn unwonted excitement, as may be judged by the foregoing emotional language. Her husband takes the matter more coolly, though he is vexed in his way that Maizie cannot make up her mind to like the owner of Roche Court.

"It is provoking, as you say; but Maizie is so young, she may change her mind a

dozen times before another year is over."

Lady Brooklyn fiddles *almost* impatiently with a bundle of charms dangling from her handsome chain, and shakes her massive head despondingly.

"I know Maizie better: she has a great deal of obstinacy."

"It has nothing to do with obstinacy," interposes the Baronet, grimly.

"Once take a thing into her head, I defy anyone to get it out again."

"It isn't a question of getting anything out of her head; it's a question of getting something *in*," throws in Sir Richard.

"It's all the same," proceeds her ladyship, majestically. "What I wish to say is this: It is not possible to influence Maizie's likes and dislikes."

"I like that in the girl," remarks her spouse.

"It's very awkward in this case," retorts the step-mother, "for Captain Brace is

thoroughly eligible; in fact it would be a brilliant match for Maizie."

Sir Richard and his wife have been sitting *vis-à-vis* in two large arm-chairs during the interchange of these few sentences. The Baronet now rises and seats himself at his writing-table—a gentle hint for her ladyship to leave him in peace—to pen his various epistles. But the second Lady Brooklyn has no such intention at present. She has conceived an IDEA—(pray let this statement be distinguished by capital letters, or italics, or something, for her ladyship's mind is like the aloe-tree, it only flowers once every score of years).

"Richard, what are you going to do about the matter?"

The Baronet, already in the middle of composing, mentally, an intricate business letter, starts at the sound of his wife's voice raised in solemn inquiry.

"What matter? — which? — how?" he

asks, uncomprehendingly.

"About your daughter and Captain Brace."

"Do? There's nothing to be done at present. The girl has refused him point-blank."

"Maizie is obedient; it is one of her best points. If you were to express your wish strongly—"

"What! command her to marry a man she doesn't care for!" interrupts the Baronet, with raised voice and stern, surprised eyes.

"She would care for him in time, for Maizie is an affectionate girl."

"Bless her!" ejaculates the Baronet. Then he turns to his wife, and addresses her in a peculiarly cold, gentle tone. "Eliza, do you know I love my daughter?" he asks.

"Yes, Richard, and therefore—"

"And therefore I will not permit her to marry where she does not love. Maizie is, as you say, an affectionate girl—it would be death to her to be bound to a man who did not possess her pure warm heart."

"Then you would let her marry any *parvenu* who happened to take her wayward fancy?"

"Time enough to decide that when she falls in love with the 'parvenu.'"

A pause.

"Captain Brace says he does not despair of gaining her heart if you will sanction his addresses," says her ladyship.

"Captain Brace has my full permission to win her if he can, for I know he is too much of a gentleman to persecute her with unwelcome attentions," answers the Baronet, statelily. "For the rest, my daughter's happiness shall be my first care; and now, my dear, I must ask you to leave me, for I have several very important letters to attend to before the early post."

"Certainly, dear."

Exit Lady Brooklyn. Her voice (not a melodious one) is heard shortly afterwards calling her step-daughter.

"Maizie! Maizie!"

"Please, my lady, Miss Brooklyn has been gone some time," says a housemaid, leaning over the banisters to give the information.

"Gone! where? She can't have gone out so early; it's not eleven yet."

"If you please, my lady, Miss Brooklyn and Master Louis have gone out for the day to picnic along the cliffs."

"Alone?"

"M. Valance went with them, my lady."

Lady Brooklyn returns to the library. Her husband does not look up on her entrance. She hears the sound of a pen scratching busily.

"Richard!"

"Well, my dear. I'm so busy—"

"Do you know that Maizie has coolly gone off on a picnic with Louis and M. Valance?"

"Yes—yes; she told me."

"She never mentioned a word about it to me."

"I suppose she forgot—really Eliza!"

"It is not at all a proper proceeding, Richard!"

"Proper—proper! I was very glad for her to go—she's been looking pale lately. The air will do her good."

"But the company will not."

"My dear! what do you mean?"

"I mean that it is not at all the 'correct thing' for a young lady like Maizie to go racing over the country with the tutor. She is not a child now, that she can do such things with impunity."

The Baronet very seldom loses his temper with his wife, but it gives way at this speech.

"Eliza, Maizie is my daughter—she is also M. Valance's pupil. She is as safe in his protection as she is in mine. I must again beg you to leave me, as I have many letters to write." Sir Richard's cold blue eye is fixed upon his wife. She understands the expression in it. She has seen it once—only once before, when he detected signs of

drunkenness in his favourite man-servant (a butler he had had for years), while waiting at table. The man left next day.

Lady Brooklyn is essentially a prudent woman, and though longing to utter further condemnatory expressions and opinions of Maizie's behaviour, she shuts her thin lips tight together and leaves the room without a word—returns to the depths of an easy chair in her boudoir, and consoles herself with some of the strangely ugly, and curiously useless bits of fancy work with which it is the fashion for ladies of the upper ten to waste (if it is correct to call any moments of an existence *wasted* that is perfectly useless from beginning to end) their time and spoil their eyesight.

There! I think we have had enough of her for the present. A little of Lady Brooklyn goes a long way. She is not interesting. We will go and look for the picnickers. They have been rowing up the Straits for the last

hour and a half—right to the mouth of the bay. They have landed now, for I see their little boat moored in yonder creek. What a climb they must have had up the steep cliff side! They cannot be far off, for it is only twelve o'clock now. In this green hollow, perhaps, where the rocks have fallen a little apart, and the kindly grass has grown richer and longer to hide the ugly rent. Yes; here they are, sitting in a picturesque group, with some small baskets scattered about, from which they have abstracted the sandwiches and cakes they are consuming. Two ladies and three gentlemen, or rather one gentleman and two boys. Maizie has brought little Lucy Wilson with her, and Louis, Charley Arundel, aged twelve years.

"This is what I call jolly," announces Louis, indistinctly, with his mouth full of currant cake. "I wish we could do this every day, instead of stewing in that stupid old school-room."

"Somebody would grow up a stupid old man, I'm afraid, if such were to be the case," suggests Maizie, smilingly. She is seated close to Lucy, who is looking even paler than usual to-day, and has scarcely spoken a word, good or bad, since they pushed off from the shore in the early morning. M. Valance and Maizie have both been doing their best to make her comfortable. The former is at present pouring her out a glass of sherry, for the girl has not eaten a mouthfull of her sandwiches, and he is afraid she will faint where she sits.

"What a relief it is to look across the sea, and see no limit to its waters—no boundary line—no further shore!" says Maizie, scanning earnestly the horizon with her far-sighted grey eyes. "Don't you find it so, Lucy? Don't you get tired of looking across those Straits, and seeing the same shore always opposite?" she asks, turning to her companion for a moment, and then

looking away—away over the sea again. Lucy's sad, rather expressionless brown eyes follow her gaze, and slowly fill with tears. "It looks so cold!" she murmurs—"so cold and distant."

"But you can imagine any shore you like to lie beyond these wild grey waves—any shore you like—and people it with those you love best."

"I should not like to think of any one I loved so far away! I would rather have them close—on the near familiar shore I can look at every day."

"But, of course, you must fancy yourself there too; near them in spirit—nearer than you can ever get in the real world."

"Dreaming, as usual, Miss Maizie?" asks M. Valance, catching the last words as he approaches with the glass of sherry. "Here, Miss Wilson, is something to keep you in the body; you need it conversing with such a visionary as my pupil."

"Drink it, Lucy," urges Maizie, as the girl places the glass beside her, and turns her head aside to hide her tears. "M. Valance, make her drink it."

Before the tutor can interfere, poor Lucy snatches up the glass again, and swallows the wine in hasty gulps for the sake of peace.

Maizie's eyes again stray over the wide waste of waters, as if the distant horizon line holds some fascination for her.

"What are you looking at?" asks M. Valance, following the direction of her eyes.

"Maizie is visiting the shore where all her best beloved dwell," says Lucy, smiling, with her brown eyes still shining and wet.

"Is she? then I suppose we had better not disturb her."

The dark grey eyes turn swiftly from the sea to the tutor's face. "I am not! I see nothing so perfect—so tangible as a shore."

"What do you see?"

"I see—I see a type of human life and incompleteness losing itself in the heavens."

"After all these restless waves, and striving currents; after all the fretting, and the frothing—no goal—no end—no prize—only a lost identity merged in the calm sky-line of eternity," murmurs the tutor, taking up the thread of his pupil's thought, as minds in frequent intercourse, or naturally of the same bent of thought, can do with the ease and certainty of a person catching up a well-known strain, in the singing of which a companion has paused.

"Not a lost identity!"

"No, only hidden; our eyesight is too weak to follow it."

"Yet some souls seem rounded off—some lives complete."

"Only small-statured souls can find room to grow to their full height here—great spirits, unfinished, uncontented, are always growing till they grow out of our knowledge and sight into Heaven."

"They are like the wide, boundless ocean, incomplete and restless for as long as we can see them, and the other souls, the smaller, they are like the Straits clasping with contented murmurs the shore of their desire—the shore where their beloveds dwell, eh Lucy?"

"Then I would rather be a smaller soul," answers the girl, the blood pulsing up into her transparently white cheek—"much rather—I hate the sea! I don't care about the glorious possibilities nor the grand distance: such vagueness and vastness turn me sick and cold. The warmth and nearness of a little human love and happiness is worth all the dreams that were ever dreamed."

M. Valance and Maizie are silent. They are both looking seaward still: a pair of dark brown eyes and a pair of dark grey eyes gazing away over the dreary waste of waters with an expression strangely similar.

"Maizie!" cries Lucy, suddenly and sharply—"Maizie!"

"Well?"

"Do you see a shore now?"

Maizie turns and looks at her girl-companion.

"You are very anxious about this fairyland of mine," she says, with an amused gleam in her dreamy eyes.

"Yes, I want to know what it is like, that I may construct one for myself when I feel lonely."

"Yes, describe it to us," urges M. Valance —"this unearthly abode, this island that is but a sunset cloud—a vapour of natural affection tinged by a ray from your bright imagination."

The yearning grey eyes steal across the bay again; the mobile lips take wistful, softened curves.

"My Island, where my beloved dwell, where there are no partings—my Island, that is so earthly with its gay familiar flowers and green, green slopes, so heavenly in its peace and light and love! The sea at our feet is

grey; as its waters near my Island they change and darken to a deep calm blue, then break into little golden ripplets of contented laughter as they kiss the shore. Is it north or south, my Island? Here are cowslips and buttercups, and here a vine drooping with its load of dusky purple fruit. Is the season spring or autumn? I smell the honeysuckle, I see a snowy mass of hawthorn bloom on yonder hedge; but these are hollyhocks, these tall, stiff flowers growing each side of my path as I walk. I have known them long since, before my hands could reach to touch their faces. This beech-tree is only just beginning to put on its suit of vivid green, and yonder behold a bower of glowing summer roses! Ah! my Island is a happy Island, for in it the sweetest flowers of each season bloom together; in it the riches of all the zones are gathered. Death is not known in it; its sky never darkens; its inhabitants experience no weariness, no painful longings.

In the light of its moon there is peace; in the warmth of its sun there is hope. The faint sweet breeze that stirs its trees and flowers is carried by the fluttering of the white-winged bird, who broods over it night and day—the white-winged Bird whose name is Love!"

"But you have not peopled it for us yet," says Lucy. "It is very strange and sweet in its daring combination of flowers and fruits, and earth and heaven; but I find it cold, for I meet no one I know."

"People it? Ah, that is easily done! My father is there; I see him smoking a cigar among that group of pine-trees. My mother, who died long ago, is there. She is laughing, and flushed with trying to reach a high-hanging rose that has grown out of reach by the aid of a broken pillar, round which it is twined. Louis is there, hat in hand, and hair flying; he is racing adown that green hill like one mad with joy. And Lucy is

there—I saw her white dress even now fluttering along by that smooth-flowing river, and M. Valance—"

The tutor, who has been listening amusedly to the girl's half-earnest, half-laughing, and wholly fanciful talk, gives a great start, then smiles.

"You are making a mistake, Miss Maizie. I am not among your best-beloved," he says, gently.

Maizie starts a little too. The tutor's name slipped out unawares. For a moment the clear grey eyes look a trifle scared and bewildered, the fair cheek flushes troublously.

"Maizie thought you must be there to keep Louis out of mischief," suggests Lucy, timidly.

"No, not Louis, but *me*," (the frank face clearing, the innocent lips parting in a jovial smile.) "Ah, M. Valance, I could not be good without you even in Eden."

"I am very glad to be there; it is a plea-

sant place, by all accounts ; but you have not finished peopling it yet ? "

" Haven't I ? I must think."

A pause.

M. Valance and Lucy listen and wait—wait for the same name ; wait, both of them, for a name that will stab them to the heart. But it comes not. How seldom anything does come that we confidently expect !

" She is too shy to speak it," thinks one throbbing heart.

" Has she another Island where she dwells alone with him," wonders the other, bitterly.

" No, I can't think of anyone else," (the white brow knitted.) " Ah, yes ! "

Here it comes at last ! M. Valance springs to his feet. Lucy turns away her head, and twists her hands together.

" Poor Annette, my French maid, who was so kind to me when I was a child. I see her there ; she is holding up her snowy apron with both hands and hastening towards me.

She has something to show me. Ah, Netta, what is it—what is it?"

* * * * *

The September twilight falls early. It is already getting dark when the picnic party set off on their homeward row. The girls, tired with their long day of climbing and strolling, are seated together in the boat. M. Valance and Charlie Arundel, a strong boy of twelve, are pulling. Louis is lying half-asleep in the bows.

"What a pleasant day we have had, May," murmurs Lucy, as the boat glides silently along through the cool, smooth water.

"Yes, very pleasant," answers Maizie, dreamily—"very pleasant!"

Lucy nestles closer, and puts her arm round her friend's waist, resting her dark-haired head upon her shoulder.

"Maizie," she whispers, "can people help falling in love?"

"I suppose not. I don't know. I suppose

not. Look at the stars, Lucy, peeping out one by one. What a tearful glimmer they have to-night!"

"But when they are in love, May, can they —can they get out again?"

"That depends who they are, Lucy. Some, it is said, never can."

"Never?"

There is silence, save for the creaking of the oars in the rowlocks, and their soft splash in the water.

"Maizie, what would you do, if you cared for some one who didn't care for you?"

"I? I should *make* them care for me."

"How would you?"

"I would love them till they had to love back again."

"Ah, but 'to be loved does not always make to love again.' Supposing the more you loved them, the less they seemed to care for you—what would you do then?"

Maizie does not answer. She looks up and around—looks at the stars quivering miles and miles away above and beyond the earth and all its troubles—looks at the water, whose cool depths seem to hint of a rest from all trouble, and shudders through all her slight young frame.

"Maizie, what makes you turn so cold and tremble? Maizie, would you *die?*"

"Die! Never!" (the slumberous eyes flashing their disdain of such an impotent ending). "Die! no, but live and learn—learn what a 'sublime thing it is to suffer and be strong.'"

M. Valance, pulling away at the stroke-oar with his powerful hands, catches his pupil's few last words, uttered louder than the rest, and his dark eyes seek hers through the gloom with an answering flash.

"Well spoken, my pupil!"

"Aye, spoken, spoken—it's easy to speak,"

moan the sad girl-lips at her ear; "but, Maizie, you don't know—you don't know!"

"I know that life is very terrible," (says Maizie, gently twining her arms about her companion, and pressing down her cheek on the one that lies pillowed on her shoulder).

Poor Lucy! hers is one of those gentle, plaintive natures capable of feeling very keenly, but incapable of a particle of protest or resistance. Patient, passive, pathetic, the stinging serpent of bitterest pain nestles in her bosom without rebuke, gnaws away at her tender, helpless heart without reproof; her hands, too meek to tear it thence, lose the energy even to draw a sheltering veil over the piteous ravages it is making there.

M. Valance watches the girls clinging together, and half smiles to think how different their position would be if Maizie loved the man her friend loved, instead of *vice versâ*. Pouf! he can see her, proud, cold, sitting by

herself, with her great eyes, defying both the penetration and sympathy of her rival, fixed on some distant star, or gazing through the darkness, as if to seek her fate, and challenge it to do its worst.

"Will one of you sing?" he asks. "Miss Lucy, suppose you give us Elaine's song of Love and Death."

"I can't; I don't feel as if I could sing just now."

"Well, Miss Maizie, you will favour us."

For answer the girl begins the song in a clearer, sweeter voice than Elaine could ever have had, as she lay adying in the little upper chamber—

"Sweet is true love, tho' given in vain—in vain;
And sweet is death, who puts an end to pain;
I know not which is sweeter—no, not I."

"Love, thou art sweet? Then bitter death must be:
Love, thou art bitter; sweet is death to me.
O Love, if death be sweeter, let me die."

As her voice rings over the water and dies

away, another, a man's voice, from somewhere near, recommences the refrain—

"Sweet is true love, tho' given in vain—in vain."

One of the girls recognises the tones of the singer.

"Oh, Maizie, Captain Brace!" says Lucy, raising her head, and peering into the darkness with startled eyes.

"A boat! a boat!" cries Louis, from the bows. Shouts are interchanged, and in a little while a row-boat containing Sir Richard and Captain Brace pulls up alongside of the home-going pic-nic party.

"We came to look for you, it was getting so dark," says the Baronet, who is seated comfortably in the stern, smoking a cigar. The Captain has both oars, which he ships immediately for the purpose of clasping a certain little hand which is stretched to him with frank *bonhommie* from the other boat.

"We started rather later than we intended,

Sir Richard, and the tide has been against us," says the tutor.

"Ah! Maizie, you and your friend can get into our boat, it will lighten M. Valance's load considerably, and it is getting late for Louis to be out—come along."

"O, papa, we are nearly home now, and I'm so tired," begins Maizie, as Lucy springs up, ready and willing to make the change.

Captain Brace holds out his hand. "Come along, Miss Wilson, don't be afraid," he says, as the girl hesitates at Maizie's words.

Afraid! holding *his* hand, as if that were possible—afraid! she who would follow the beckoning of that hand to death? She does not say anything. She only places her little hand, trembling like a bit of wind-blown foam, in his, and steps out of the one boat into the other in a moment.

Poor girl! he scarcely looks at her, so eager is he to clasp that other hand, and

have that other girl-form sitting close beside him.

"Now, Miss Brooklyn."

But Miss Brooklyn is very comfortable where she is. She does not move.

"Make haste, Maizie," says Sir Richard.

"Papa, do let me stay where I am—I don't make any perceptible difference to the weight of the boat. Do I, M. Valance?"

"Of course, you do," answers stroke, rather brusquely.

The girl's indecision is terribly aggravating. A coy caprice to tantalize her lover, so he translates it. He will put an end to it. His short answer has a more salutary effect than even he has calculated on.

Without a word, Maizie starts up, causing the little boat to rock from side to side in an unpleasantly suggestive manner. Too indignant to notice the Captain's outstretched hand, she places her foot impetuously on the

gunwale, and tries to spring into the boat alongside. As a natural consequence, the boats part company, and Maizie jumps into the dark cool water. For a few moments all is confusion. Two men spring up in the boats, that are drifting further and further apart, to plunge in and rescue what is dearer to them than anything in the world. Two spring up, but only one leaps into the calm star-lit water, the other is held back by clinging hands that refuse to leave go their hold—weak hands that love makes stronger than death.

Maizie has hardly time to feel frightened. A cold plunge—the water in her eyes and mouth, and then strong arms round her, bearing her up, and brave, tender eyes gazing down into hers in a passion of loving solicitude.

"Don't be afraid," says M. Valance.

The girl smiles.

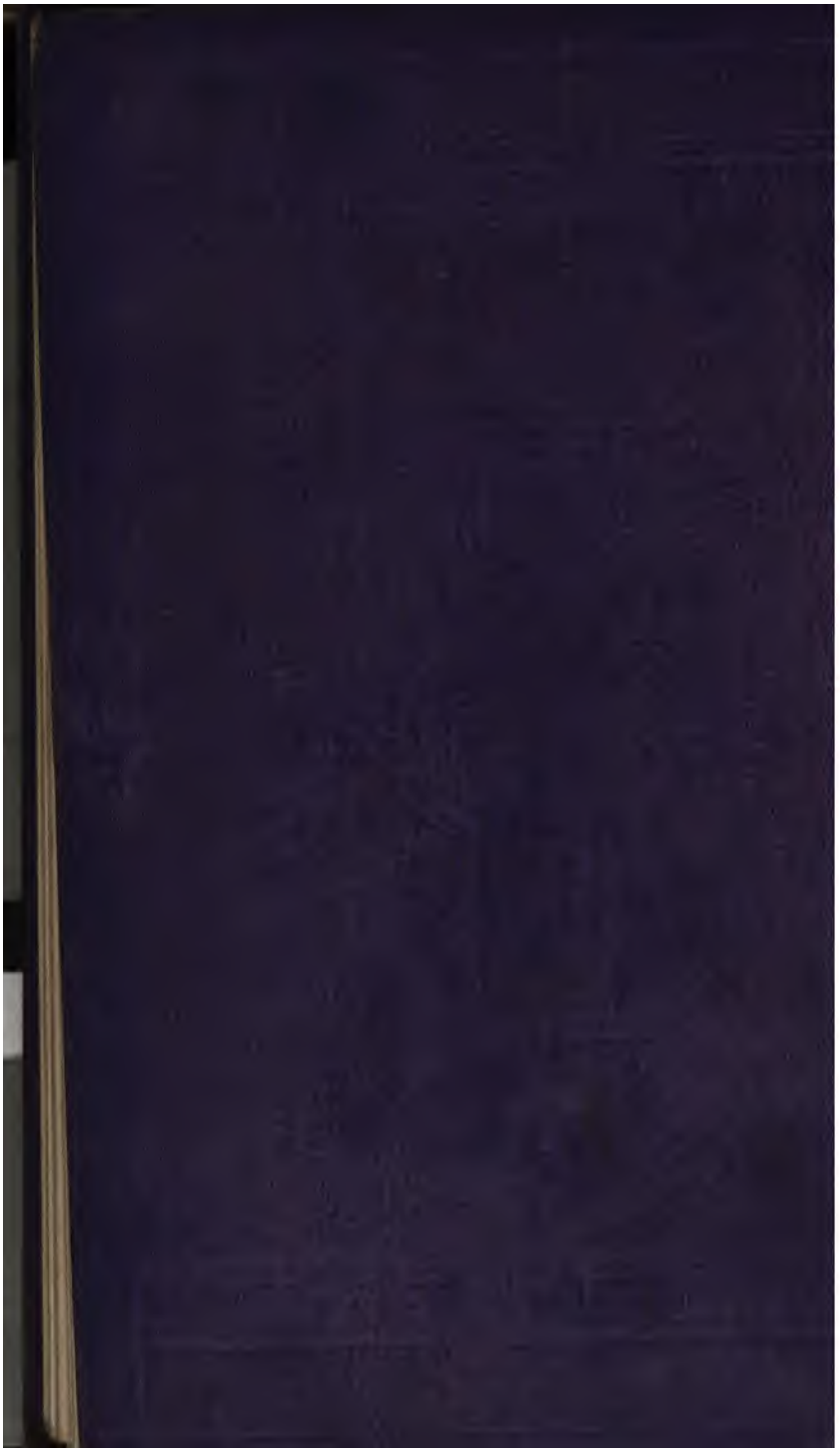
The nearest boat is the one Maizie was

so loth to leave, but the tutor makes for the one out of which he sees an old man leaning.

Sir Richard himself takes his daughter from her dripping rescuer's arms.

Maizie laughs, and pushes back her wet hair from her face.

M. Valance, empty-armed, swimming away to his own boat again, hears these words following him into the darkness:

"God bless you, Valance! this is the second time you have given me back my daughter!"

END OF VOL. II.